"Achieving Kuwait 2035 Vision towards Persons with Disability Project"

Inclusive Employment Strategy Final Report

Submitted by Mostafa Attia to UNDP Kuwait and PADA

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

The preparation of this strategy would never see the light of day without the support of many stakeholders who I would like to express my gratitude to in this section. This cooperative spirit and help was a key to facilitate my role as consultant.

To start with I send a great thanks and acknowledgement to Mr. Ahmed Ghanem, the UNDP project manager, as without his support and enthusiastic spirit I would have found it somehow more difficult to move from the consultancy stage to the other. His knowledge and recommendations were also a key to drive the consultancy in the right direction.

Also Mrs Al-Khansa Al-Husaini whose questions and discussions improved the technical content of both the situational analysis report as well as the Inclusive Employment Strategy. She put her exerted efforts to provide all required facilities to move along with the consultancy activities. Her vocal support and introducing me to other stakeholders helped open many connections that benefited the strategy production.

A great thanks to Mrs Sousan Al Awadhi, who was very supportive to provide all the required logistics, as well pre-organising my meeting schedules in relation to PADA disability and employment staff. Her regular communication and follow-ups made the data generation phase very efficient, and her support was professionally continued during the preparation and conducting of the inclusive employment workshop, which ran smoothly as a result.

A special thanks and appreciation to Mrs Hanan Yasin who was very cooperative to facilitate the prerequisites before my traveling to Kuwait. Her politeness and understanding made the whole consultancy process go more smoothly. Her efficient communication with PADA's internal staff, as well as the managing department, facilitated much scheduling of consultancy activities in advance.

To my personal assistant, Asma Bashir, who provided both mobility and technical support during the consultancy period. Her assistance to me was much appreciated, either to prepare the required training and first round table presentations, or to help in formulating various Inclusive Employment Strategy drafts. We worked very nicely together which benefited the deliverables of this consultancy.

Last but not least, special gratitude to Dr Shafika Al-Awadi, PADA Secretary General. Her vision and recommendations enriched the strategy content. Her openness and honesty were also useful to open some discussions about the current challenges facing the country in terms of disability. Her empowerment of myself was a pathway to help me gather all required data for this work.

Introduction

Inclusion turned out to be an essential term used by both policy-makers and disabled activists when advocating for disabled people's rights. International conferences and high level discussions also used inclusive development as an important term to show its acknowledgment of the voices of disabled people and the opportunities that should be opened to increase their participation. Inclusive employment terms also came to be at the forefront of both the disability international convention, as well as the UNCRPDs and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The question however is, were disabled people in Kuwait (the core focus of this consultancy) eager to grasp the spirit of these terms, and be mainstreamed within the employment market? Although the country may have provided them with a group of in-cash and in-kind services, it's important to observe the degree to which these services respond to their current demands. Do these type of services improve their independency? Or do they make them more dependent on this support?

The rights of disabled people's employment received enough attention from these two international frameworks (UNCRPD and SDGs). Article 27 of the Convention stressed the importance of labour, equal opportunities, and providing disabled people with the necessary reasonable accommodations to equally access various employment fields. It stressed this right by urging the countries who ratified the Convention to provide the legal framework which guarantees disabled people to be mainstreamed in the labour market (for more details on Article 27, see Annex 1). Disabled people's rights of inclusive employment were also highly stressed by Goal 8.5 of the SDGs (see Annex 2). The goal stressed the importance of having decent employment opportunities for everyone, including disabled people. This could be achieved by not only providing the necessary tools to accommodate this group, but also to increase the global community's sensitivities to prepare the necessary rehabilitation and training programs to fulfil this right. The inclusive development agenda and SDGs have motivated a wide number of international organisations working in the field of disability and development to consider inclusivity as a main theme. As a result, many projects have been established to promote disability-inclusive rights. Many countries also formulated a group of strategies to respond to the same goal.

In Kuwait, the country has submitted its 2035 Vision towards Persons with Disability, including three main objectives:

• Output 1.1: Enhanced human capacities and institutional effectiveness for prevention, early detection, diagnosis and rehabilitation of disabilities.

• Output 1.2: Coordinated and well organized efficient efforts towards removal of barriers to social, economic and educational inclusion of persons with disability.

• Output 1.3: Increased technical expertise and organizational capacities for implementation of Universal Design and countrywide use of technology enablers.

To fulfil these goals, the government cooperated with some international organisations including UNDP to establish strategies and a plan of action, moving forward towards implementing these goals (see Consultancy Objective for more details).

This report will draw on the cooperative efforts between Public Authority for Disability Affairs' (PADA) employment department, UNDP and disabled people to establish an Inclusive Employment Strategy towards mainstreaming their rights into public, private and micro-financial project employment. The final report aimed to take the reader through the steps taken in the assignment using the consultancy's deliverables as a way of structuring the process. Part of the Strategy's aim was to include a contextualization of both disabled people's current types of jobs or unemployment rate as well as the community treatment that they receive, and familiarization of the current employment situation generally in Kuwait.

Consultancy Objective

Among the three overall objectives of the project "Achieving Kuwait 2035 Vision Towards Persons with Disability", this Consultancy was created to contribute to Output 1.2 to improve the organizational and technical capacities of PADA to facilitate work and employment of persons with disabilities.

• Output 1.2: Coordinated and well organized efficient efforts towards removal of barriers to social, economic and educational inclusion of persons with disability.

To comply with this objectives both PADA and UNDP has announced a Consultancy subdividing this into a group of deliverables. Each was then further split into clearer steps and actions to facilitate the consultant's job. It is important to acknowledge to country's move towards inclusive employment, demonstrating their support to enhance the employment environment to accommodate disabled people's demands. It also showed their understanding of the current global legal framework calling towards inclusive development.

Consultancy Deliverables

As per the submitted inception report both UNDP and the Consultant agreed to respond to the below deliverables according to specific timelines.

In the next few pages this report will present the Consultant's efforts to apply both the consultancy's main objectives as well as how he responded to each of the below deliverables.

Deliverables 1.1-1.2 - Initial meeting and Inception Report

1.1 Initial coordination meetings with PADA, UNDP and the project team.

1.2 Develop and submit an inception report including the results of the initial review, suggested methodology and work plan for the whole assignment.

Responding to the first deliverable an initial meeting has been conducted between Mr Ahmed Ghanem (UNDP) and Mrs. Al-Khansa Al-Husaini (PADA) to discuss the expected aims for this consultancy work, guiding the Consultant through the steps that he should take to accomplish the mission. Part of this discussion was to agree the list of interviewees and stakeholders who will enrich the data generation phase with their input. The meeting also discussed a group of interventions which can build some milestones to mainstream disabled people within the employment market.

It is important to note that the consultancy teams from both organizations was very helpful in providing the required information and/or answer any questions that could facilitate the consultant work.

The submission of the Inception Report took place two weeks after the Consultancy began, as agreed. The aim was to present the timeline, expected results, suggested methodology e.g. interviews, focus groups, and observational methods to comply with the task's initial proposal, as well as to provide a section to discuss reasonable accommodation for the Consultant's impairment including personal assistance while carrying out this task.

A section of this report was devoted to providing a brief summary of the methods of implementation of the consultancy deliverables, as written in the TOR.

It is worth noting that the final version of this report has been submitted of a group of discussion with the consultancy team who gave realistic guidelines in relation to the submission of each below deliverable.

Deliverables 2.1-2.5 - Situational analysis of disabled people's employment in Kuwait

2.1 Report on analysis of the current Kuwait and PADA legal and policy framework related to employment of person with disabilities, including identifying and reviewing the model of intervention, current practices and capacities within PADA.

2.2. Report on analysis of the suggested employment model and process proposed by the new PADA organizational development process.

2.3 Develop and submit report on good practice principles including best recommended practices based on international and national legal instruments and policy initiatives concerning the right to work of persons with disabilities.

2.4 Produce and submit report on conducted situation analysis including gaps analysis, areas of strength and areas for improvement in consultation with relevant PADA staff at management and technical levels, beneficiaries and any other stakeholders.

2.5 Submit and present the report on main findings and initial recommendations with PADA and UNDP (1 roundtable).

Responding to these deliverables required compiling a group of actions to balance between understanding the current situation of disabled people's employment in Kuwait's public and private sectors. The deliverable also aimed to turn the challenges faced by them into a group of lessons learned, benefitting from the other countries' practices and used methodologies to mainstream disabled people within the labour market. Responding to this deliverable also required a familiarisation of the international legal frameworks as well as the national employment legislation in relation to employment in Kuwait, such as SDG Number 8, Article 27 of the UNCRPD, and Law Number 8 of 2010 in Kuwait. These first few weeks of work benefitted greatly from interviewing disability and employment stakeholders in PADA, and more importantly, following the participatory approach by conducting focus group discussions with disabled people to learn about their experience and challenges when reaching the stage of employment, and to bring other recommendations and voices to the strategy attention. Finally, it was also beneficial to receive a few studies, reports and legislations which were used during the desk review period to produce the situational analysis report. According to the above, a first draft of the situational analysis report, including the international good practices, and recommendation section has been submitted to receive the consultancy team's feedback, who assisted the Consultant to further develop his report. For this, a PowerPoint presentation was used for one round table discussion with representatives from both PADA and UNDP staff to present the situational analysis report draft, along with the Inclusive Employment Strategy preliminary goals and sub-goals (see Deliverable 3 for more details).

The report has used the SWOT analysis to draw on not only the challenges faced but also to draw the attention to how the available opportunities can benefit the call for inclusive employment. Both the policy makers' will as well as the country's financial resources can act as an important backbone to motivate the employment of disabled people. The next step was to accompany this SWOT analysis with examples from the available international good practices, to learn how these could enhance the inclusivity of employment within the country. As a result, a mixture between a group of approaches were suggested by the Consultant to empower disabled people to gain equal employment opportunities (the twin-track, competitive employment and supported employment approaches). The previous could not be done without the analysis of PADA's recent five year disability strategy 2014-2019, including its new models of inclusive employment, which helped to understand what the current inclusive employment structure looked like. The found gaps within the strategy may have clarified some reasons behind the challenges which faced the employment market.

Finally, the submitted situational analysis report was also accompanied with a group of recommendations to enhance the inclusivity of the labour market. It's important to note that this section was used as a milestone while building the strategy's objective values and guidelines.

Deliverables 3.1-3.3 - Inclusive Employment Strategy

3.1 Submit finalized and approved strategy of engagement and model of intervention for the field of work and employment of persons with disability in line with the new PADA organizational structure

3.2 Submit and present report on main outputs and recommendations with PADA and UNDP (1 roundtable)

3.3 Submit finalized and approved internal action plan based on the above strategy and the new PADA organizational structure focusing on competitive and supported employment options

To prepare the Inclusive Employment Strategy the Consultant has relied on many important resources. One example is the submitted situational analysis report which gathered group of challenges and opportunities available in relation to the field of disability and employment. The second example is the familiarization with other countries' strategies announced within related fields. As a result, seven goals were suggested to form the basis of the submitted Inclusive Employment Strategy. Each of them included a group of sub-goals to guide PADA and other related organisations for mechanisms to mainstream disabled people within the labour market. The second step was to submit a one-year action plan (see 3.3) in which most of these goals were broken down into a group of activities, each with its own timeline and relevant bodies or organisations who will implement these activities. The aim was to facilitate the action plan implementation process and to produce clear steps that could

guide towards inclusive employment. To measure this action plan's success, each group of activities were connected with indicators to give a sense of whether the plan is moving in the right direction.

The strategy also included a model of intervention (see 3.1) which balanced between both the international good practices (see 2.3) and suggested approaches that proved their success in the field of employment. This model of intervention aimed to develop the current PADA employment department to be a centre for inclusive employment to develop disabled people's capacities through training programs, as well as to remove any faced barriers that could hinder their equal productivity within public and private institutions.

The final section of the submitted Inclusive Employment Strategy included a recommendations section which suggests a group of mechanisms that could be utilised in the near future to improve the performance of PADA, the Department of Labour, and other stakeholders to mainstream disabled people, prioritising their capabilities above their impairments. The conducted round table with PADA and UNDP representatives, as mentioned in the previous deliverable, included a brief presentation of the Inclusive Employment Strategy draft, along with the recommendations section. It's worth noting that this round table meeting was very beneficial, as its content was used to update the strategy final version.

Deliverables 4.1-4.4 - Communicating the strategy to the employment team (Training)

4.1 Develop and submit a capacity building plan of relevant PADA staff at management and technical levels on applying the proposed model of intervention and measures in line with the new PADA organizational structure

4.2 Develop and submit the training package and materials for on-job and off-job components.

4.3 Implement the main trainings for PADA staff (5 days off job training & 5 days on job training)

4.4 Submit training report (with training activities description, discussion, recommendations and post training evaluation)

Part of the strategy objectives included a variety tools to improve the technical and administrative capacities of PADA staff working in the field of employment so they can implement the newly suggested action plans through a group of training programs. This has been translated into clear activities within the first year's plan of action. To manage this process the consultant has familiarized himself with PADA's working structure, and this included learning about their current daily activities in relation to disability employment. The second step is to develop a training workshop in relation to the prepared strategy draft. After discussion with both PADA and the UNDP team the Consultant suggested devoting the first 3 days of the planned workshop to providing some basic information about disability definitions and models, suggesting that this may build the PADA staff's technical capacities of some terms and concepts that they should have while working in the field of disability.

These were followed by 7 other days to present the prepared Inclusive Employment Strategy draft, gaining the trainees' opinions on it. Sharing their perspective regarding both strategy and its first year of action plan was very important in terms of seeing its feasibility of application on the real ground. For more details about the work activities see the submitted report as part of the Consultancy documents (which includes training activities description, discussion, recommendations and post training evaluation).

Strategy design, methodology and analysis

Since this assignment aimed to draw on macro level policy rather than assessing individual challenges, any suggested data generation methods were meant to enrich the prepared policy framework with the true demands facing the disability employment market, following the bottom-up approach. This policy analysis in other words learned from both the current employment situation in Kuwait as well as international good practices to best mainstream disabled people within the employment market. This could show us the existing gaps and the reasons behind it. It created a group of milestones for this strategy.

Although the inception report introduced a brief background about both the data generation and analysis methods to achieve the consultancy's aim, this report section meant to familiarise the reader with some themes which this consultancy has relied on through its different stages. To make sure that the themes of inclusion, participation and neutrality have been considered, a mixture of methods have been considered throughout the strategy. The data generation phase has mixed between interviews, focus groups and document analysis as the main sources to collect different layers of information which all managed to produce a situational analysis report. The aim was understand how the current PADA employment policies are satisfying to disabled people, and if not, what the existing gaps are. Moreover, to dig in-depth into the current situation of disabled people's employment, and to deeply understand the challenges faced, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative analysis has been relied on to produce a group of recommendations and milestones used within the formulation of the strategy. Despite the limited availability of statistics and reports, the rich primary data acted as an important source while preparing the situational analysis report.

The participatory approach was key throughout the entire course of the consultancy. Bringing to the attention disabled people's voices, as well as presenting a strategy draft to the employment stakeholders working in PADA, was very useful to inform the final version of the document. Both participants felt that their opinions were highly considered within the strategy preparation process. The usage of theme is reported to be a very important theme within the new global discourses (SDGs). Finally, presenting the strategy draft in front of high level stakeholders working in that field and asking for their approvals ensured that it is feasible to be implemented on the real ground.

The theme of inclusion is the second which was considered while choosing the analytical methods. The conducted workshop to present the strategy draft (Deliverable 4) as well as the focus group with disabled people could be seen as two examples that show the strategy's eagerness to apply this concept. It is a theme that is also embedded as a core focus of this consultancy. It's worth noting that more work needs to be done to positively change stakeholders' attitudes to promote the concept of inclusion, as my communications with them showed some resistance regarding this concept.

Consultancy limitations and advantages

This section will be devoted to presenting the Consultant's reflections on his experience during the consultancy period. It will interact with advantages which may have assisted this consultancy to reach its closure period, but also to draw the attention to some limitations that may have hindered the researcher to achieve better results while preparing the Inclusive Employment Strategy.

- The country's signature to both the UNCRPD and SDGs, as well as the development of their national disability law, acted as very important opportunities which empowered this consultancy to assess the current rights given to disabled people to be employed equally. These discourses may have forced a group of policymakers to prioritise disability into their political agenda, which could be the reason behind their establishment of various strategies to promote their rights in access to education and employment. In addition, some available employment initiatives acted as a milestone which the Consultant has relied on while building his strategy.

- Although only a limited number of disabled people joined the organized focus group to discuss their experiences and challenges in relation to being mainstreamed in the labour market, these this focus group was very useful to elevate their voices. It was also good of some PADA staff to join these group discussions to sense disabled people's demands and relate them to their future plans.

- The third advantage is the country's financial resources which could be used to provide disabled people with the required tools and accommodation to facilitate their equity within the employment market. This, together with the above mentioned political willingness, could drive the country towards more inclusivity in action.

- One of the major limitations was the scarcity of data and statistics. The preparation of the situational analysis report will benefit greatly if more statistics were available to understand the number of disabled people employed or unemployed, and where they are employed. The unavailability of a PADA archive of studies, researches and statistics made it harder for the Consultant to deeply examine some of the challenges that face the disabled population in relation to employment.

- A limited conflict of information has been discovered during both the first wave of data collection and the conducted workshop with PADA employment staff while meeting department managers, and it is important to speak about macro level policies and challenges faced. Some tended to be somehow defensive, focussing on their achievements instead of admitting their mistakes. In addition, it was very useful to interview a group of employees working in the disability and employment departments to discuss and reflect on the barriers faced on their daily work.

- Despite the limited amount of information, both UNDP and PADA staff were very cooperative to provide any available materials and/or to organize any interviews or

focus groups required to facilitate the Consultant's role. Some other departments, however, did not have the same spirit, as although they have promised to provide many documents and statistical information, they failed to do so.

- The inaccessibility of PADA headquarters may have acted as a barrier for disabled people to visit the policy department to conduct the interviews. As a result, the focus groups were reorganized to accommodate their impairments and needs.

- While it was not suggested by the TOR, it would have been very helpful if the consultant could have conducted two to three field visits to institutions which employ disabled people to see how their impairments are accommodated and how their qualifications are considered in relation to their current jobs. This sample could have helped to better understand the reality of disabled people's employment and what jobs they normally do, as well as to learn the existing approach that the country is following. This could also have given us a sense of the level of segregation that they face within their sheltered workshops, especially in the field of vocational employment.

- Although we did not manage to meeting representatives from the Ministry of Labour, conducting the workshop inside one of the PADA rehabilitation centres helped us to be aware of some implemented vocational training programs related to the field of disability.

Recommendations and concluding remarks

This final section will be mainly concerned with drawing upon a group of recommendations based on the consultancy findings. It will learn from both the submitted situational analysis report as well as the Inclusive Employment Strategy with its one-year action plan. Some of the challenges could be translated into some recommendations which aimed to develop the inclusivity of the labour market so disabled people will be equally considered. Although there was a recommendations section included within the Strategy, these concluding remarks will be more general, touching specifically on the field of inclusive employment as well as other fields related to disability, considering their indirect effects on employment.

The variety of approaches used by this strategy, such as the participatory approach and inclusive approaches may have opened various debates among stakeholders working in the field of disability. One recommendation is to use this opportunity as a starting point for an examination of these concepts' application within a real environment. This should be attached with a wider promotion of these concepts to act as fundamentals when working with the field of disability.

A second recommendation is to improve the cooperative and networking spirit between organizations working in the field of disability. It has been found that NGOs work in isolation with scattered efforts and initiatives. Building small networks between disability organizations will positively influence their solidity which will be reflected in the level of disabled people's inclusion. The application of this is crucial, as disability will not be mainstreamed unless it is looked at as a crosscutting theme when preparing the country's national policy or local plan.

The third recommendation is to establish a large scale campaign to promot disability rights, introducing the new models and classifications inspired by the UNCRPD. Using the voice of disabled people will be a key driver to convince the community of the vitality of this campaign. Declaring this campaign under the auspices of His Excellency the Prince will give more power and effectiveness, encouraging different organisations to participate in it. Although PADA has played a significant role in promoting the disabled population's rights, it is evident that applying the participatory approach with the involvement of disalibty related organizations will make a paradigm shift.

The fourth recommendation will mainly consider the implementation of all prepared strategies, including the Inclusive Employment Strategy. This will not be done unless extensive follow-ups are initiated form PADA's SG office to ensure all submitted strategy and action plans are implemented reasonably. One way is to conduct periodical meetings with each department, appreciating their achievements as well as dealing with any challenges that they may have faced while implementing this strategy. Another way is to dynamically change or to improve these plans to fit with any new political or economic developments.

Although the strategy considered the principles of participation of disabled people, coordination between different stakeholders, inclusivity, gender equality, and geographical

distribution of services, all balanced between different impairments, to be its backbone, promoting these themes into action may require further coordinated work from governmental and civil community organisations working in related fields to crosscut disability within their policies. One positive example is the announced Kuwait youth strategy which mentioned disabled youth as part of its target groups.

The penultimate recommendation is to build upon some training packages suggested by the strategy, turning them into national training programs to rehabilitate disabled graduates to be mainstreamed within the labour market. Moreover, to use some creative solutions to guarantee the employment of disabled people such as providing a group of some incentives and benefits to the companies who employ a large number of disabled people. This may motivate others to better employ disabled people.

The final recommendation will be related to dissemination methods for this Inclusive Employment Strategy. Since disabled people are one of the core audiences for this strategy, it will be very useful to think of many accessible tools that could be used to accommodate disabled people reading it. Examples of this could be printing the document in Braille, digital format, larger print, easy read version and some sign language videos to be interpreted for people with hearing impairments etc. To better publicise the Strategy, it's suggested to accompany it with numerous media interviews or brief written summaries to introduce the concept of inclusive employment to the Kuwait community as well as answering any debates or thoughts that may arise in the audience's mind. Other methods could be printing an executive summary or some posters about the strategy, to be spread among different community stakeholders. Finally, a conference could be held under the auspices of both PADA and UNDP, to bring a group of employed disabled people to speak about their successful experiences in front of stakeholders working in the field of disability. This event could also be used to officially launch the Strategy.

To conclude, it is hoped that the application of the suggested model of intervention, which learned from the international good practices, will better inform the inclusivity of disabled people within the employment market. This can no doubt help to empower the various global discourses that the country ratified, supporting disabled people's rights.