

Designing Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities: Experience from Haiti

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This Knowledge brief is part of the [Solutions for Youth Employment \(S4YE\)](#) Knowledge Brief series focusing on the design and implementation of youth employment programs. This brief builds on S4YE's 2021 Discussion Note, [Digital Jobs for Youth with Disabilities](#), highlighting strategies that programs have used to overcome challenges and increase access for youth with disabilities in digital jobs.¹

In this Knowledge Brief, we examine strategies the World Bank's *Promoting Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Social Protection and Employment Programs*² project team in Haiti adopted to improve access of persons with disabilities to employment services in Haiti. The main project activities were to 1) Develop a disability module to register persons with disability in the national social registry, and 2) Pilot and promote a skills training model to increase labor market access for persons with disabilities. This component also included capacity-building workshops for increasing private sector involvement, national awareness events and job fairs.

The key lessons learned by the team include 1) Focusing on demand-driven skills helped design effective training modules, 2) Working with mainstream training providers to adjust their services can broaden opportunities for persons with disabilities, 3) Proactive outreach and multi-mode communications strategy to identify and engage with employers and human resource departments was effective, and 4) Training programs in difficult contexts should be accompanied with business development activities.

INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities face supply- and demand-side challenges in the employment ecosystem. On the supply-side, they face disadvantages in accessing education and vocational skills development; they may need to bear additional out-of-pocket costs to obtain accessible transportation to skills training sites, personal caregiving services, or assistive devices; and face societal prejudice that impacts the scale and quality of training opportunities they receive.³ Thus, they often are at a disadvantage and enter the labor market with a skills deficit and lack previous work experience. There is also bias and discrimination in where and how persons with disabilities obtain skills and access training opportunities. They are usually placed in skills training programs in segregated settings where the curriculum is often not linked to labor market requirements,⁴ making them less marketable to employers. On the demand side, also, they face constraints such as low awareness and confidence among employers on how to include persons with disabilities in the workplace.⁵ In instances where they are employed, they are more likely to be in low-paid jobs with poor career prospects and working conditions. Often there is a lack of support for persons

¹ S4YE is working on follow on notes to the Discussion Note on [Digital Jobs for Youth with Disabilities](#). These will focus on developing further operational insights for youth with disabilities on topics such as increasing private sector involvement, working with youth with disabilities in fragile and conflict affected areas and more.

² P145468

³ (Bauwens, et al., 2019)

⁴ (International Labour Organization (ILO); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018)

⁵ (Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE), 2021)

with disabilities to maintain employment and explore career development. Insufficient access to financial and business support services are important demand-side constraints faced by persons with disabilities.⁶

Thus, there is a need to focus on demand-led skilling and upskilling opportunities for persons with disabilities and ensure that appropriate accommodations are in place. Providing equal opportunities and access for persons with disabilities to employment services like training programs and job placement services requires coordination between key stakeholders, such as government agencies, private sector employers, and civil society organizations to provide training for in-demand skills (Box 1) and accompany these measures with employer awareness and effective communication.

Box 1. Critical actions for developing training programs⁷

- **Policy and System** includes overseeing the inclusion efforts, stakeholder cooperation, gender issues, and monitoring and evaluation. Ministries of Labor are key in scaling up projects, and their engagement level can be strengthened.
- **Awareness and Capacity:** addresses issues of training awareness among persons with disabilities, community, staff, employers, media.
- **Participation:** refers to outreach and enrollment of trainees with disabilities and ensures that persons with disabilities and their organizations are involved in all levels, such as serving as trainers and participating in decision making.
- **Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation:** includes curricula, the built environment, general accessibility, and methods of providing for reasonable accommodations and the availability of equipment and devices.
- **Knowledge and research about social barriers, solutions to address constraints, types of accommodations needed, and identifying sources of devices.**

In this Knowledge Brief, we examine strategies used by the World Bank’s ‘**Promoting Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Social Protection and Employment Programs**’⁸ project team to **improve access of persons with disabilities to skills training and job search services in Haiti.**

CONTEXT: PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN HAITI

Haiti’s population faces high levels of poverty, low levels of human development, and heightened risk to political crises, natural disasters, and other shocks. With a Human Development Index ranking of 170 out of 189 countries in 2020, Haiti is the poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean region and among the world’s poorest and most unequal countries. The latest official data indicate that 58.5 percent of the population were poor or living at or below \$1.90 per day in 2012.⁹ More recent World Bank estimates indicate a marginal increase, with nearly 60 percent of the population being poor in 2020.¹⁰ According to the 2016 Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)¹¹ around 4% of the Haitian population aged 5 and over had one or more disabilities.

⁶ (International Labour Organization (ILO); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018)

⁷ (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2016)

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⁹ Enquête sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages après Séisme 2012. Institut Haitien de Statistique et Informatique (IHSI).

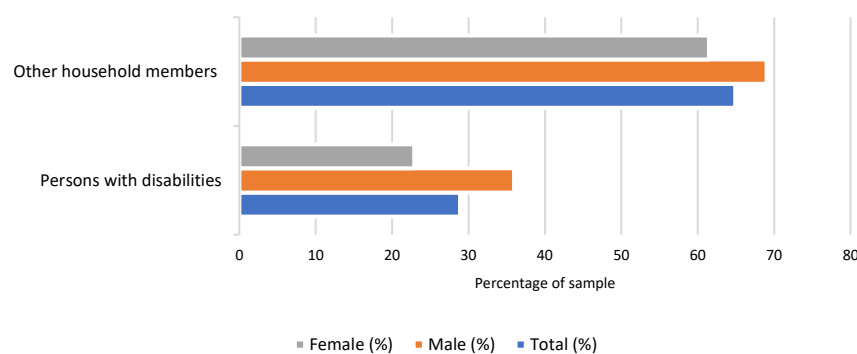
¹⁰ World Bank. (2021). Haiti Overview, April 26, 2021. Available at : <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>

¹¹ <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/dhs/about>

Persons with disabilities are among the most at-risk groups in Haiti, vulnerable to both poverty and natural disasters. The evidence was however sparse, given that the last nationally representative survey was conducted in 2012, and no reliable database was available to support policy making focusing on supporting this vulnerable group. Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to shocks in Haiti, given the country’s high exposure to natural disasters. The country has a higher number of natural disasters per square kilometer than the average among Caribbean countries and is prone to hurricanes, cyclones, torrential rains, flooding, and earthquakes. These shocks can result in permanent disabilities, as evidenced by the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Port-au-Prince in 2010, which left one-quarter of the 280,000 persons injured suffering from severe injury and seven percent faced at least one permanent disability due to physical (amputees, etc.) or mental factors (such as psychological shocks).¹² As of 2014, approximately 172,000 people, including at least 900 persons with disabilities, were still living in camps.¹³ Furthermore, public infrastructure was severely damaged which rendered the environment less accessible to persons with disabilities and disrupted informal, community-based support networks.

Persons with disabilities face low human development outcomes. The project team collected new data based on the Washington Group recommendations and the social registry modules to shed light on the needs of persons with disabilities in Haiti. The data revealed that persons with disabilities have much lower education levels than other members of the households, who are more than twice as likely to be able to read and write (see Figure 1 below). Compared to a total labor force participation rate of 68.93%,¹⁴ 16.5% persons with disabilities report as working.¹⁵ Persons with disabilities are also largely excluded from the labor market, even though the 2012 regulation for integrating persons with disabilities required employers to hire a quota of persons with disabilities.¹⁶ About 47% of them have never worked,¹⁷ primarily due to their disability or health condition, and more than three quarters not currently working (see Figure 2 below). Around 78% of those reporting working did so as own-account workers.

Figure 1 Literacy rates across disability and gender



¹² (Danquah & Brus, 2013).

¹³ Temporary camps were established for individuals displaced due to the 2010 earthquake. Source: [Handicap International, 2014. Haiti: Situation update – Jan. 2014.](#)

¹⁴ Source: World Bank Data- Labor force participation rate, total (% of total population ages 15-64) 2019 – Haiti- <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.ZS?locations=HT>

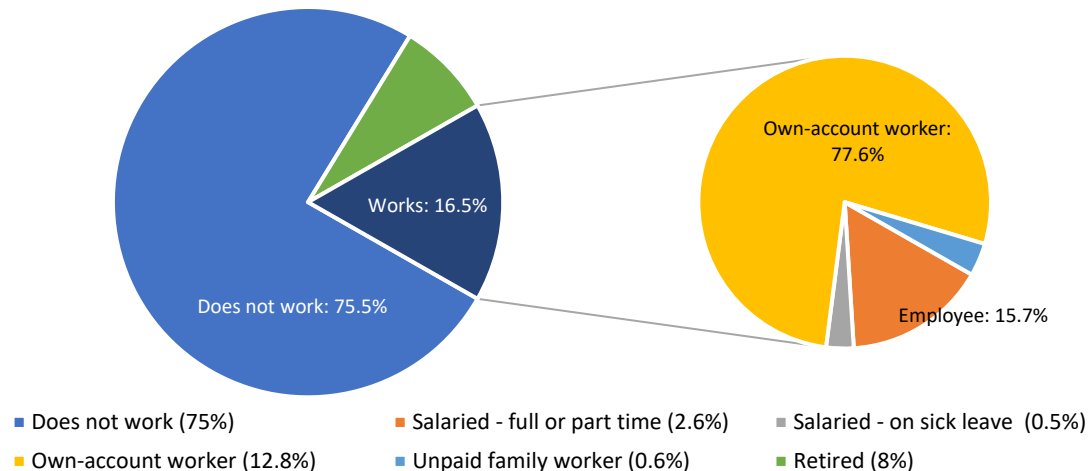
¹⁵ World Bank calculations based on SIMAST BSEIPH data

¹⁶ up to 2% for a firm of more than 1,000 employees

¹⁷ World Bank calculations based on SIMAST BSEIPH data

Source: World Bank calculations based on SIMAST BSEIPH data collected in 2021. Sample for figure 1 includes all households with at least one person with disabilities.

Figure 2 Labor market participation of persons with disabilities



Source: World Bank calculations based on SIMAST BSEIPH data in 2021. Sample includes working-age persons with disabilities (N=28,476)

Thus, there was a need to strengthen institutional capacity, systematically identify eligible beneficiaries, and systemize interventions to improve efficiency and ensure existing resources reach those most in need. In 2007, the Office of the Secretary of State for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities (BSEIPH) was established by a Presidential decree under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MAST). BSEIPH's objectives are to:

1. Implement a national policy to support the integration of persons with disabilities.
2. Improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities.
3. Raise awareness among different stakeholders about disability.
4. Strengthen the capacity of organizations working in the field of disability.
5. Put in place a legal framework for the protection of persons with disabilities.

BSEIPH had created a job placement service to support employment opportunities. A full-time staff member was hired to develop employment services, organize job fairs, and establish a website to better link persons with disabilities and prospective employers.

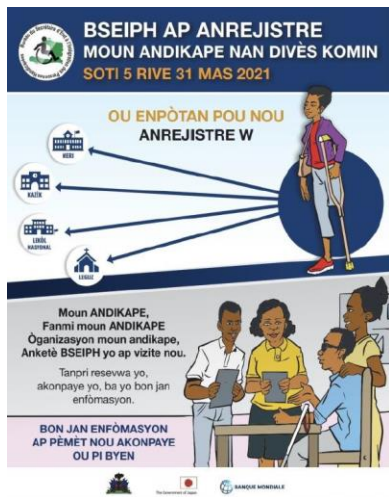
Due to limited institutional capacity, there was limited outreach, poor coordination with other stakeholders, and low capacity to collect and use data on persons with disabilities to plan well-targeted programs. BSEIPH lacked resources and had a limited presence outside the capital city of Port-au-Prince. The dialogue with potential employers was also nascent.

The World Bank's Project - **Promoting Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Social Protection and Employment Programs (P145468) (2018-2021)** - aimed to address the multiple gaps, and to support the Government of Haiti's efforts to identify, register, train, and support persons with disabilities to access meaningful jobs.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

1. Identification of persons with disabilities

To identify persons with disabilities in Haiti and improve targeting by government programs, the project team developed a survey instrument based on recommendations of the [Washington Group](#)¹⁸ to capture information on persons with disabilities and include them in the national social registry SIMAST.¹⁹



The survey instrument was adapted to the local context and Creole language. The enumerators were trained in sign language, and the methodology allowed for proxy interviews to accommodate some of the impairments.²⁰

To facilitate registration into the social registry, BSEIPH introduced several innovations, including a new registration card for persons with disabilities with a unique ID (which can be used to access social services in the future), a strong media presence to encourage enrolment (through radio, Twitter, newspapers, Facebook, and posters see *example on the left*), and piloting of self-registration using kiosks, either in-person, via dependents or organizations that support persons with disabilities. As a result, 53,453 persons with disabilities registered in the national registry.

2. Labor market assessment

A labor market assessment was done before starting employment activities. This assessment helped identify areas where there was a demand for skills. Training programs were then designed to cover agricultural production, agricultural product transformation, motorcycle repair, cooking and baking, web design and infographics, cellphone, laptop and tablet repair, and massage therapy.

3. Skills training

Skills training was provided for 223 persons with disabilities in various trades (breakdown in table 1 below) based on the area identified through the labor market assessment and through dialogue with different organizations for persons with disabilities. The duration of trainings varied but took on average 25 days. Trainings included the distribution of a starter kit for all beneficiaries for self-employment upon graduation. The starter kits varied according to the different trades. For example, for the cooking and pastry making participants it included kitchen utensils, a blender, a mixer, pots, bottles, storage containers, a portable cook stove, or for the agricultural production participants a wheelbarrow, shovel, and other tools. More than half of the graduates were women. The training programs supported different types of disabilities (physical, speaking, hearing, and visual impairments) except people with intellectual

¹⁸ The Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) was established under the United Nations Statistical Commission to address the need for cross-nationally comparable population-based measures of disability. Its mandate is to promote international coordination for health statistics by focusing on disability data collection for censuses and national surveys.

¹⁹ Social Registry of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (*Système d'Information du MAST*) <http://infopage.simast.info/>

²⁰ A proxy interview: interviewing someone “other than the person about whom information is being sought”. In this case it would mean a caregiver, family member of a person with disability etc.

disabilities. The trainings were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in delays in the implementation due to periods of restrictions in in-persons activities, but thereafter implemented with adequate COVID-19 prevention measures (prioritizing outdoor trainings, personal protective equipment, frequent hand-washing and social distancing, sensibilization on COVID prevention).

Table 1: Training participation of beneficiaries

CURRICULUM	TOTAL	WOMEN		MEN	
		Graduates	%	Graduates	%
Cooking and pastry-making	19	15	79%	4	21%
Motorcycle repair	32	0	0	32	100%
Agricultural technology	22	12	55%	10	45%
Processing of agricultural products	54	36	67%	18	33%
Massage therapy	30	19	63%	11	36%
Web design and infographics / cellphone, laptop and tablet repair ²¹	66	24	36%	42	64%
TOTAL	223	82	52.22%	75	47.77%

Beneficiaries completing the trainings and receiving their starter kits with various tools



4. Outreach workshops for private sector firms

40 human resource representatives from private companies participated in workshops on employment opportunities for persons with disabilities to learn more about corporate responsibility and services offered by BSEIPH. This activity intended to promote the employment potential of persons of disabilities and help firms comply with their legal obligations as well as improve accessibility of their workspaces.

5. Awareness events and jobs fairs

Seven events were organized to raise awareness and promote persons with disabilities. The last job fair allowed 21 firms to conduct 310 interviews with participants. These events enabled human resource departments of various firms to better understand the potential and capacities of people with disabilities and provided an opportunity for many job seekers to participate in resume writing workshops and discuss job opportunities with potential employers.

²¹ Note that the training for both the Web design and infographics as well as the Cellphone, laptop and tablet repair training programs was almost finalized at the time of closing and beneficiaries are currently supported through the Haiti Digital Acceleration Project to obtain their certification.

DESIGNING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE HAITI CONTEXT: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Working in a fragile and highly vulnerable environment requires flexibility to respond to situations as they arise. Recurrent shocks have exacerbated Haiti’s underlying socioeconomic drivers of poverty and vulnerability, threatened livelihoods, hampered service delivery, and worsened human development outcomes. The context for implementing activities under the project has been made particularly difficult by the COVID-19 pandemic, government instability, insecurity reflected in high numbers of kidnappings, conflict between armed gangs and episodes of all-out lockdowns (peyi-lòk). Despite these circumstances, the program was successful. The lessons from this project could be valuable for other project teams working in fragile and conflict-affected situations where governments have limited capacity.

Some lessons are outlined below:

1. Focusing on demand-driven skills helped design effective training modules.

An assessment of the promising sectors helped design effective training modules, especially given the constraints of a short timeframe available for the implementation of activities. The project team focused on identifying accessible, short trainings that could lead to a certification and for which demand existed. This made it possible to graduate approximately 157 persons with disabilities with a post-training employment rate of 58.5% approximately one (1) month after graduation.

The project accommodated different types of disabilities (physical, hearing, visual and vision impairments) except people with intellectual disabilities. For instance, the project was able to include 30 persons with visual impairments to complete the program and graduate by focusing on massage therapy, a field traditionally [more inclusive for persons with visual impairments](#). Some activities were also identified due to their particular relevance for the community of persons with disabilities. For example, a training considered due to COVID focused on sewing face masks, particularly masks with clear windows to help persons with hearing impairments communicate through lip-reading. Unfortunately, no provider could be identified for this training.

2. Working with mainstream training providers to adjust their services can broaden opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Training programs designed specifically for persons with disabilities are often ineffective in helping beneficiaries access jobs or start businesses.²² Such trainings often have significant gaps between skills provided and demands of the labor market.²³ There are also challenges of accountability, quality, and exclusion that create a self-fulfilling nature of low expectations about what youth with disabilities can do.²⁴ Research indicates that dedicated centers can often reach only small numbers of persons with disabilities and are not scalable.²⁵

An essential aspect of mainstreaming disability is taking the required disability-specific actions to empower and enable participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream training programs. This is

²² (World Bank Group, 2018), (International Labor Organization, 2020)

²³ (International Labor Organization, 2020)

²⁴ (Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE), 2021)

²⁵ (International Labor Organization, 2020)

part of the *Twin Track approach* in disability-inclusive development.²⁶ Following this approach, the team in Haiti worked with specialized CSOs to identify existing training providers who could adjust their services for persons with disabilities.²⁷ While this led to delays in procurement, the team prioritized this approach to broaden the opportunities for training for persons with disabilities.

The adjustments made by mainstream training providers included (1) including sign language interpreters as well as guides for visually impaired participants, (2) providing an allowance to cover transportation costs to travel to the training site, as well as insurance to cover work accidents (3) several training courses were provided on mobile training units, allowing for training to be conducted outside of the capital of Port-au-Prince, which usually concentrates most of the training opportunities (this ensured greater participation of individuals living in rural areas given very limited accessible transportation) and (4) requiring training centers to provide accessible environments (ramps, signage, etc.).

3. Proactive outreach and multi-mode communications strategy to identify and engage with employers and human resource departments was effective.

The project helped raise awareness among employers regarding the regulation that has set a quota for employment of persons with disabilities and demonstrated how organizations and businesses can better leverage the skills that persons with disabilities offer. The project focused on communications through various media (including radio, newspapers²⁸, brochures) to help convey these messages. The proactive employer outreach strategy helped mobilize 40 firms in the job placement service database, surpassing the project target by a third and them actively participating in job fairs. The BSEIPH offered employers intermediation services and support to identify potential adjustments to make workspaces accessible.

Raising awareness and advocating for persons with disabilities in Haiti



(L-R) Information on the law for the integration of persons with disabilities highlighting the employer requirement to hire PwDs; “I am handicapped, and I am talented.”; Additional materials can be found at the BSEIPH Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/bseiph/>.

Before the last job fair organized in June 2021, the BSEIPH prepared participants by organizing resume writing workshops, offering them access to computers to prepare them, and coaching them on how to

²⁶ (World Bank Group, 2018)

²⁷ Not all trainings could be implemented through mainstream providers (in particular due to the lack of decentralized training institutions), but this approach was adopted in particular for the Web design and infographics / cellphone, laptop and tablet repair training in Port-au-Prince.

²⁸ Links to some newspaper articles: [Link 1](#) [Link 2](#) [Link 3](#)

prepare for interviews. The fair allowed 196 participants to meet with 22 firms – despite many cancellations due to the COVID context, through 310 interviews.

4. Training programs in difficult contexts should be accompanied with business development activities.

Haiti has very limited opportunities for formal jobs, making it very challenging for beneficiaries of skills training to integrate into the labor market. This makes self-employment a more accessible option than jobs with existing public or private sector employers. Of the 157 persons with disabilities who completed training and obtained certification, 74 created income-generating activities, selling baked goods, peanut butter, or preserves (see an example below) or selling services such as motorcycle maintenance. Providing technical skills (such as business plan development) and financial support (such as startup grants) alongside training could further facilitate success in self-employment or the creation of small businesses. While this project could not cover such activities due to time and financing constraints, these should be explored through new follow-on pilots.

Example of a graduate of the agricultural product processing training and her business



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S4YE is a multi-stakeholder coalition that aims to provide leadership and resources for catalytic action to increase the number of young people engaged in productive work. It is a global program housed in the Jobs Group of the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice of the World Bank Group. It consists of a network of over 35 private companies (Private Sector Advisory Council), a network of 44 high-potential and innovative youth employment projects (Impact Portfolio), a group of talented and enterprising global youth (Youth Advisory Group) that provide youth voice on the design of youth employment programs of S4YE and the World Bank and has a network of 150 World Bank youth employment projects in 69 countries.