INCLUSIVITY AT THE WORKPLACE

FIVE PRINCIPLES THAT ENABLE AND EMPOWER

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India’s recent growth performance has been spectacular, with the country remaining one of the fastest growing economies in the world. To move to the next level of growth, India needs to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Mainstreaming inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) is the key to meeting the MDGs.

India can do this by implementing the recommendations of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These two complementary initiatives can help the country realise the MDGs and pave the way for inclusivity. At the same time this augurs well from a strategic point of view, as a diverse work force makes good business sense!

For India to become an inclusive society, it is important that the nation’s corporate sector sensitises itself to the country’s diversity, its gender differences, ethnicity, and tolerance, and emerges as truly inclusive. Towards this end, industry needs to embrace the philosophy of the Four-Leaf Clover, centred on the concepts of strong leadership commitment, robust policies, capability building and an enabling culture. By combining capability building with a more “rights-based” agenda, companies can ensure that they offer equal opportunities to the physically challenged in the workplace. In this way, they can also tap into the wide pool of available talent from among persons with disabilities, and harness their strengths and expertise.

The NASSCOM Foundation (NF) has been promoting balanced development within the IT industry and this compendium is a step towards making IT-BPO organisations more “inclusive.” The Handbook lists key Inclusivity Principles for the office, which companies can strategically align with, to enable disabled employees to enjoy a normal work life. Meant to be a ready reckoner, this NF Handbook provides insights on the Best Practices being followed by India’s IT-BPOs to achieve their inclusivity goals. It talks about how receptive companies have been to the idea of building capacities of the disabled, and training them in job skills, to improve their employability quotient.

Using this compendium, companies can assess their Diversity Policies and look at ways in which they can set up a robust and flourishing culture of inclusivity on their turf. Organisations can undertake mainstreaming and set benchmarks for themselves, by proactively following these policies and principles.

We need to remember that diversity is just a “number value” and inclusivity the “outlook.” This is the approach that organisations must adopt if they are to foster a workplace where the differently-abled can work alongside their peers, productively and efficiently.

Som Mittal
President, NASSCOM
Our world is changing, and information and communication technology (ICT) is central to this change. ICT has the potential to bring huge advances both economically and socially, and all of us should be able to participate and enjoy these benefits. However, digital inclusion is not something that will happen on its own. Although the use of ICT is gradually increasing, the divide between people engaged in the digital revolution and those who are not is unfortunately not diminishing fast enough. This gap is especially true for persons with disability (PWD) and has placed further obstacles in their path to joining mainstream society.

Recognising the importance of inclusion, NASSCOM and NASSCOM Foundation initiated the ‘Accessibility Initiative’ earlier this year for the IT-BPO industry. The initiative aims to create an industry platform to empower persons with disabilities using the collective strength of NASSCOM member companies. The initial focus of the initiative will be on Accessibility (both physical and ICT), Employability and Assistive Technologies. Towards this end, NASSCOM Foundation, along with support from its member companies, has put together this handbook – ‘Inclusivity at the Workplace: Five Principles to Enable and Empower the Differently Abled’.

NASSCOM Foundation’s Research Team would like to express its gratitude for the time and effort invested by each participating company. This document would not have been possible without the unconditional support of our member companies such as Aegis Ltd., Aurionpro Solutions Ltd., Capgemini Consulting India Pvt Ltd., Cognizant Technology Solutions, Genesis Burson Marsteller, IBM India Pvt. Ltd., Mindtree Ltd., Mphasis Ltd., Netmagic Solutions Pvt. Ltd., Patni Computer Systems Ltd., Tata Consultancy Services, Vindhya e-Infomedia Private Ltd., Vision Beyond Resources Pvt. Ltd., Wipro Technologies, Zensar Technologies Ltd.

Further, we gratefully acknowledge the valuable inputs of Mrs. Papiya Sarkar (Senior Architect, CPWD), Shivani Gupta (Director, AccessAbility) and Srinivasu Chakravarthula (Accessibility Manager, Yahoo! Software Development (India) Pvt. Ltd).

Our special thanks to Wipro Technologies who have made their inclusive policy public through this document. We look forward to more of our member companies following suit in the coming years.

NASSCOM Foundation Research Team
Having a formal workplace policy specifically for inclusivity helps focus on what is important to your business and how you want people to view your company. For example, if the business has been up and running for some years it can be particularly helpful to re-assess your fundamental ethos.

Diversity and Inclusivity are broad terms and interpreted differently by different institutions. Developing a specific policy will help you clarify exactly what it means to your company. There are also business benefits to having a formal policy, namely it offers clear evidence of commitment towards inclusivity and can enhance your company’s credibility both amongst employees and clients.

A carefully thought out policy, with real targets, and performance indicators, will help you measure the impact of diversity and inclusivity activities and refine your approach if necessary. In addition, this would mean that it would be easier to incorporate diversity policies in your overall business plan and ensure that your firm also benefits as well as wider society.

Given here is a structure which has been put together after in-depth research of some existing policies in India and the world over.

1 **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND INCLUSION**

- Ensure that all workplace policies and practices are free from discrimination based on disability
- Ensure that PWD applicants be considered for employment according to their aptitudes, abilities, and qualifications, and that applicants with a disability are not at any substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled applicants
- Implement PWD sensitive recruitment and retention practices and proactively recruit and appoint PWDs to managerial and executive positions too
- Pay equal remuneration including benefits, for work of equal value
- Assess what applicants with a disability can do to meet the requirements of any vacancy. In addition, bear in mind that an employee with a disability may need to carry out his or her work in a different way
- Establish employability skills programs for PWDs to gain the skills to enter your organisation. Design appropriate induction and orientation programs which deal with issues of diversity and inclusivity for all new recruits
2 SUSTAINABLE POLICIES TO PROMOTE INCLUSION
- Establish goals and targets on PWD inclusion across the organisation
- Engage internal and external stakeholders in the development of company policies, programmes and implementation
- Ensure that policies are sensitive and not based on assumptive conclusions on working capacities of PWDs
- Create an internal disability forum, to effectuate needs assessment of the PWDs and constant dialogues. Such a forum must have representation from employees with disability

3 ACCESSIBILITY AND REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS
- Engage in active discussion with PWD employees on accessibility needs and invest in providing an accessible environment
- Ensure that reasonable physical modifications are made to the workplace so that an employee with a disability is not at substantial disadvantage compared to a non-disabled person
- Establish a safe and accessible physical environment, including providing accessible transport and modified equipment
- Make your website and Intranet accessible as per national and international standards and provide assistive technology to your employees as per their need and requirements

4 LEADERSHIP, SENSITISATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- Affirm top management support and direct executive engagement to create and implement policies for PWD equality
- Establish an internal PWD help desk to continuously engage in a dialogue with the employees with disabilities in the company. Invest in workplace programmes, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, to ensure sensitisation and peer understanding and acceptance of PWDs as valuable members of the team
- Lead by example; showcase commitment to equality and PWD inclusion and influence clients, business partners, supply chain and industry peers to respect the company’s commitment

5 TRANSPARENCY, MEASURING AND REPORTING
- Publish the company’s policies and implementation plan for promoting inclusivity
- Establish benchmarks that quantify inclusion of PWDs in terms of recruitment, progress on assessment, training and promotions
- Measure and report progress both internally and externally
CASE STUDIES

The case studies in this section have been listed because they embody some of the best practices laid down in the previous section. The companies mentioned here have put in place progressive and employee centric policies which is bringing them a social return on investment.

Mphasis – An HP Company
Looking beyond recruitment

For Mphasis, inclusivity is embedded in their attitude and this starts from recruitment and moves to growth and development of each employee. Being an equal opportunity employer, the company ensures that needs of PWDs are taken into consideration at every stage from recruitment onwards. The firm ensures that reasonable accommodation is made during the recruitment process and PWDs are encouraged to apply for all available posts.

The induction programme includes training which is sensitive towards the needs of PWDs. Therefore facilities like audio visual tools, wheelchairs, video captioning, etc. are provided during the induction training. In addition, Mphasis has a sensitisation program for all employees, which ensures seamless assimilation of PWDs in the company.

Mphasis has aligned its inclusive policy with the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006. The company has an internal subject matter expert and consults Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC), an NGO, to understand the requirements of PWDs. The physical infrastructure of all premises has been made accessible for PWDs, which is regularly audited by DEOC. Further, Mphasis also has an accessible website which follows the WCAG 2.0 guidelines.

Such comprehensive and holistic practices have helped to make Mphasis one of the few companies where PWDs account for 1% of the workforce.

Vindhya E-Infomedia Private Ltd
Making diversity the rule, not the exception

Vindhya E-Infomedia located in Bangalore, is a one of a kind firm. It recruits mainly the disabled for all its operations in data management, data entry, data processing, data conversion, etc. While companies are still deliberating the employment of PWDs, eVindhya has set a path breaking example by designing their business model around employing primarily persons with disabilities; as many as 95% of their workforce is disabled. Further, most of their employees are school and college dropouts who are given relevant training for jobs in the company. Not turning away any disabled person who applies is their motto and if candidates are found to be lacking in job skills, they are referred to relevant skill training programs and absorbed on completion of the training. Their attrition rate is minimal, employees’ productivity is at par with any able bodied person and the company still runs a sustainable business model. The 5% of their workforce who are not disabled are hired based on their sensitivity to and understanding of persons with disability.

Through these progressive policies and practices, eVindhya has successfully proven that a viable and sustainable business can be run having a predominantly disabled workforce.

¹The selection of cases here represents only the best practices captured during a recent survey done by NF on this topic.
WIPRO TECHNOLOGIES
Actioning out Inclusivity

Wipro Technologies is one of the pillars of the IT-BPO industry in India. In the space of diversity and inclusivity too, they have been stalwarts – adopting progressive policies and practices early on. Wipro espouses the spirit of our second workplace policy by actively applying it in their workplace.

Being an equal opportunity employer, the company has a diversity policy which has been framed in consultation with experts in the field. The result is a policy with six key action areas – Accessible Physical Infrastructure, People Policies, Information Systems, Talent Transformation, and Talent Acquisition Process. Further, to ensure the top management level involvement, the company has a Diversity Council where business leaders meet and set agendas with respect to the six key action areas.

Wipro’s infrastructure standards (which were earlier based on National Building Code 2005) have been modified to include national and international norms for creating barrier-free buildings in 2009. This has since won them awards and recognition from the civil society and the Government.

MINDTREE LTD
Creating a Culture of Inclusivity

Mindtree is a well recognised brand today not just because of its success in business, but also because of the culture it has been able to create within the organisation. Mindtree’s ethos is underpinned by a strong set of values known as ‘CLASS’ – Caring, Learning, Achieving, Sharing, and Social Responsibility.

It is no wonder then that at MindTree, inclusivity is part of their DNA. It starts with job postings which from July 2010 encourage candidates with disabilities to apply for all available posts that they may be qualified for. The objective here was to get rid of stereotyping where it is believed that a person with a certain kind of disability will only be able to effectively perform certain kinds of jobs.

Apart from diversity sensitisation trainings at the time of induction and later, the company also works with the People Functions Representatives especially on this issue. Further, the company informs all new entrants of relevant Government schemes and benefits, along with their joining instructions.

Mindtree follows the physical accessibility norms and recently carried out an accessibility audit for three of its buildings to further validate conformance to international standards of accessibility. Based on the audit results, it is looking forward to make all other building accessible as well.
# SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

This questionnaire is a self-assessment tool to help you assess your company’s current status with regard to inclusion of persons with disability. The questions can, in addition, act as guidelines for good practices in this sector.

**Assign 1 point to every answer marked YES and 0 to every answer marked NO**

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND INCLUSION

This section deals with statements related to equal opportunity policy, including an inclusive recruitment process

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<td>1. My company has a stated equal opportunity policy</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. My company has an inclusive job description for all jobs in the company and it proactively recruits and appoints PWD to managerial and executive positions too</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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<td>3. My company takes into consideration the needs of the PWD during the recruitment process</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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<td>4. My company pays equal remuneration including benefits, for work of equal value for employees with disabilities</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. My company conducts technical and soft skills trainings for PWDs at regular intervals to help them learn and grow on the job</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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## SUSTAINABLE POLICIES TO PROMOTE INCLUSION

This section deals with statements related to the inclusivity policy of companies

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<td>1. My company establishes goals and targets on PWD inclusion across the organisation.</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. My company has associated with a subject matter specialist to understand the issue of disability and/or review policies for the disabled</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My company has an internal disability forum, with representation from employees with disability, to effectuate needs assessment of the PWDs and constant dialogues</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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## TRANSPARENCY, MEASURING AND REPORTING

This section deals with the statements related to measuring and reporting mechanism

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<tr>
<td>1. My company establishes benchmark that quantifies inclusion of PWDs in terms of recruitment, progress on assessment, training and promotions</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My company has a reporting mechanism which reports against the set targets in relation to employment of PWDs</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My company policy and implementation plan for promoting inclusivity is accessible by the public</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
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ACCESSIBILITY AND REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS

The workplace is made comfortable and accessible for persons with disabilities

1. My company engages in active discussion with PWD employees on accessibility needs
   - YES
   - NO

2. All offices, buildings and campuses in my company are fully accessible to PWDs
   - YES
   - NO

3. Transport facility provided by my company is accessible to PWDs
   - YES
   - NO

4. My company provides mobility assistants to PWD employees requiring this facility
   - YES
   - NO

5. My company has an emergency preparedness plan to ensure that employees with disability are efficiently evacuated in emergency situations
   - YES
   - NO

6. Access audits have been carried out for all buildings and campuses of my company
   - YES
   - NO

7. My company’s website is accessible and is in accordance with accepted WCAG guidelines
   - YES
   - NO

8. My company has carried out a web accessibility audit
   - YES
   - NO

9. My company has a budget for retrofitting existing buildings to make them physically accessible
   - YES
   - NO

10. My company provides assistive technology for all employees with disability who require it
    - YES
    - NO

11. My company has an annual budget head for assistive technology tools and this is annually reviewed
    - YES
    - NO

LEADERSHIP, SENSITISATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This section deals with statements related to top management support & engagement and sensitisation

1. My company’s top management are directly involved in creating and implementing inclusive policies
   - YES
   - NO

2. My company conducts induction and/or general sensitisation programmes for employees in relation to inclusivity
   - YES
   - NO

3. My company has an internal PWD help desk to continuously engage in dialogue with PWDs in the company
   - YES
   - NO

YOUR SCORE:  MAXIMUM SCORE: 25
DEFINITIONS

DEFINING DISABILITY

“Disability” The term persons with disabilities is used to apply to all persons with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (UN Enable Program in the FAQ)

International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH, 1980): Disability is interference with activities of the whole person in relation to the immediate environment.

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF): The term “disability” refers to externally imposed impairments, activity limitations or participation restrictions

“Discrimination on the basis of disability” means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation. CRPD

“Reasonable accommodation” means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. CRPD

“Universal design” means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

ACCESSIBILITY

Physical Accessibility: While it is often used to describe facilities or amenities to assist persons with disabilities, as in “wheelchair accessible”, the term can extend to Braille signage, wheelchair ramps, elevators, audio signals at pedestrian crossings, walkway contours, website design, reading accessibility, and so on.

Web Accessibility: Web accessibility means that persons with disabilities can use the Web. More specifically, Web accessibility means that persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web, and that they can contribute to the Web. Web accessibility also benefits others, including older persons with changing abilities due to aging.

WCAG Guidelines: The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) documents explain how to make Web content accessible to persons with disabilities. Web “content” generally refers to the information in a Web page or Web application, including text, images, forms, sounds, etc.

Assistive Technology
Assistive Technology includes a variety of devices and equipment that help a person maximise his or her abilities, thus minimising the effects or challenges of a disability or the ageing process.
REFERENCES

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGISLATIONS AND GUIDELINES

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2. International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)
   http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/
3. UN Enable
   http://www.un.org/disabilities/
4. The Mental Health Act, 1987
   http://www.tnhealth.org/mha.htm
5. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Full Participation and Protection of Rights) Act 1995
6. Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier Free Built Environment for Disabled and Elderly Persons
   http://socialjustice.nic.in/glinecpwd.php
7. Web accessibility Guidelines
   http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php
8. WCAG Guidelines
   http://www.w3.org/WAI/guid-tech.html
9. Creating Change– Innovations in the World of Disability, an Ashoka publication

WORKPLACE POLICY DOCUMENT

1. Wipro Technologies
   http://www.wiproorgtest.peppersquare.net/sustainability/people_with_disabilities.htm
2. Cambridge University Disability and Employment Policy
   http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/disability.html

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