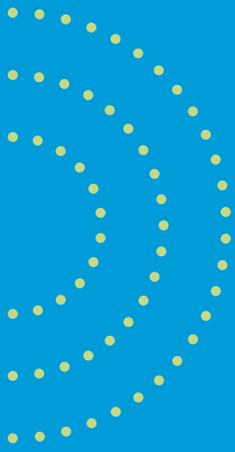
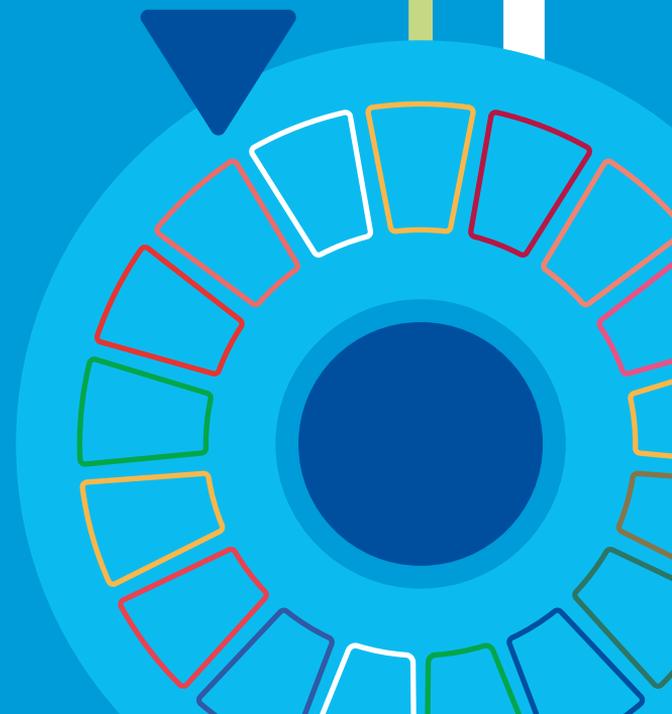




Supporting the Employment of the Persons with Disabilities in the Public Sector



2022



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Prepared by the TSU Disability Research Center with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UK aid from the UK Government. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of UNDP and UK aid from the UK Government.

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Summary

Promoting the employment of the persons with disabilities (PWDs) is a prominent topic in a number of countries around the world. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) stipulates the creation of equal conditions for the employment and work of the PWDs on the open labor market. Nevertheless, the indicator of employment of the PWDs across the world is significantly lower than the rate of employment of individuals without disabilities. To enable inclusive and equal working environment for the PWDs, international organizations and governments of various countries work towards collection of statistics about the employment of the PWDs. This statistical information serves as the basis for the analysis of the progress in the employment and social inclusion of the PWDs, as well as for the analysis of the factors influencing their sustainable employment that helps the development of social programs and services to support the PWDs.

The aim of the present research is to analyze the specificities of the employment and work of the PWDs in the public sector. In particular,



to examine effective methods for keeping the record of PWDs employed in the public sector and



to analyze the factors that influence the employment and work of the PWDs in the public service.

The research has relied on quantitative as well as qualitative research methods. The quantitative research involved online survey of the persons with disability employed in the public service. Semi-structured interview and focus group methods were used for the qualitative research; respondents for the qualitative study were selected from the following target groups:

- 1 PWDs employed in the public service;
- 2 PWDs with the experience of working in the public service who no longer work in the public service;
- 3 employees of HR departments of public entities where PWDs work;
- 4 immediate supervisors of the PWDs and
- 5 individuals with expert knowledge.

The analysis of quantitative data was based on descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was used for the analysis of qualitative data. Raw data obtained as part of the research was analyzed in light of the results of international and local researches and relevant literature.

The research has revealed that the same factors generally regarded as main barriers to the employment of the PWDs are relevant in the area of the employment and work of the persons with disabilities in public sector in Georgia: lower competitiveness of the PWDs on the open labor market (due to lower professional skills and competencies of the PWDs compared to others), inaccessible facilities, stereotypical view and stigma of employers and the society (especially towards individuals with psycho-social needs). Although, we can say that the public service is even less accessible for the persons with disabilities due to high requirements – most of the times the requirements entail higher education that is relatively rare among the PWDs. Higher education is also important for professional advancement in the public service which is also a problem for the majority of PWDs. No significant efforts are made to attract PWD candidates to vacancy announcements. PWDs employed in the public service are generally satisfied with their jobs, although they do not always work on positions that is commensurate with their skills and interests – they accept a job they are offered since they prefer this rather than being unemployed. In the majority of cases, they have positive experience of interaction with their co-workers and immediate supervisors. Although, the salary for the majority of them is not sufficient for decent living – this does not have to do with their disability, rather, it is due to remuneration policy within organizations – the pay in organizations is generally low. The situation is further exacerbated by additional expenses of the PWD employees.

There are no exact indicators about PWDs employed in the public sector in Georgia, or in general, about PWDs employed in the country – the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT) does not process these data. The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) collects information about PWDs employed at public entities, although there is no integrated, unified approach and methods for the collection of data. Respectively, current data is incomplete and does not reflect the complete picture of the PWDs employed in the public service.

International experience shows that government acts as a leader in the collection of information about employment of the PWDs. It creates cooperation platforms with employers to promote the process of data collection by employers. The disclosure of data about physical and mental health by employees is voluntary. The collection of this type of information is effective when employers as well as employees clearly know the purpose of data collection and are certain about the confidentiality of data. And ultimately, it should be taken into account that the collection of data about physical and mental health of employees is effective only when it is part of an organization's general rights based policy and serves the creation of equal and needs based working environment for employees.

I. Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) stipulates the creation of equal conditions for the employment of the persons with disabilities. Article 27 of the Convention obligates States Parties to ensure the employment of the PWDs in an open labor market, by protecting their basic rights. The CRPD sets forth the requirement that PWDs should be protected against discrimination at every stage of employment. Furthermore, the requirement to provide effective working environment, professional growth, and career advancement opportunities. Pursuant to the CRPD, States Parties shall promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector, as well as create necessary conditions for their self-employment. While Article 27(g) is about the safeguard to employ persons with disabilities in the public sector (UN CRPD, 2006).

Georgia signed the CRPD in 2009. The Parliament of Georgia ratified the document in 2013, and it entered into force in 2014. After the CRPD became applicable in Georgia, certain steps were taken towards promoting education and employment of the PWDs. In particular, inclusive education was enhanced in public schools and vocational education institutions (The Ministry of Education and Sciences of Georgia, 2013; the Ministry of Education, Sciences, Culture and Sports of Georgia, 2018; Makharadze et al., 2019). The law on Supporting the Employment of the PWDs was enacted to promote the employment of PWDs (the Parliament of Georgia, 2020). According to the Tax Code of Georgia, an individual with a severe disability is exempted from revenue tax if the person's annual income is under GEL 6,000, while in case of a person with significant disability – if their annual income is not higher than GEL 3,000. Furthermore, it should be noted when a PWD is employed in the public sector, their pension is suspended, with the exception of individuals with severe disability and significant disability due to eyesight (the Parliament of Georgia, 2004).

Lately, researchers started to look into the factors that influence the employment of the PWDs in Georgia – social and psychological factors have been analyzed that have impact on the process of the employment of the PWDs (Sumbadze et al., 2015; Makharadze et al., 2018). This topic is also reflected in the Public Defender's Parliamentary and special reports (The Public Defender of Georgia, 2019).

The present research focuses on the employment of the PWDs in the public sector. Its main goal is to look into the factors that have impact on the employment and work of the PWDs in the public service. Furthermore, the research focuses on the design of effective ways for keeping the record of PWDs employed in the public sector.

The research was implemented by the TSU Disability Research Center, in close cooperation with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), with the UNDP and the UK aid support.

II. The analysis of international and local situation

There are about 780 million persons with disabilities of the working age in the world and their majority is not economically active. The situation of the women with disabilities is even more difficult (ILO, 2019).

There is no accurate indicator of the employment of the PWDs in Georgia since the National Statistics Office does not process these data. The difficulty with the collection of the aforementioned statistics is firstly due to the fact that there is no accurate number of PWDs in the country – according to the Social Service Agency data, 128,144 individuals have disability status in Georgia – this is the number that receives social package based on the status (the SSA, 2021). This number is 3.43% of Georgia's population. Although, if we take into account that according to the WHO data, PWDs represent 15% of the population (WHO 2021), many questions arise concerning the statistics about the PWDs living in Georgia.

The process of assigning a PWD status is closely related to the statistics about PWDs. In Georgia this process is based on a medical diagnosis and respectively, PWD status is assigned to individuals who have a certain diagnosis. Furthermore, medical diagnosis stipulates whether an individual will have PWD status assigned which determines their eligibility for pension. According to the researches performed in Georgia, due to medical approach used in the evaluation and a lengthy evaluation process, many individuals are left without a PWD status and pension (Makharadze et al., 2019; The Public Defender of Georgia, 2019). In addition to a medical model of disability, the stigma in the society also has an impact on the process, particularly with respect to mental health problem. There are families who do not want to register a family member with mental health problems in the health care and social system, to avoid stigma from the society (the Public Defender of Georgia, 2019). Based on the aforementioned, it is hard to say how many PWDs are employed in Georgia, including in the public sector.

As has been mentioned above, the employment of PWDs is a current issue for developed states as well. Respectively, this topic is constantly on the agenda of the UN and ILO (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2020). For the creation of inclusive and equal working environment for PWDs it is important firstly to collect statistics about the employment of the PWDs which enables the analysis of progress in the employment and social inclusion of the PWDs, and secondly, the factors that influence sustainable development should be analyzed, which will contribute to the development of social programs and services to support PWDs.

2.1 Collection of data about employed PWDs

The identification of disability is among significant matters during the collection of data about employed PWDs. How should a person with disability be identified? who is considered a PWD – who has an official document that proves a relevant status or those who consider themselves PWD? This issue is detailed in the UN Data Sources Guidance (The Data Sources Guidance). The aforementioned Guidance comprises recommendations about how the information about indicators of the Articles of the UN CROD should be collected. This document refers to the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) used for identification of disability internationally. The UN Department of Statistics relies on this questionnaire and it is used for the population census surveys. Washington Group Short Set on Functioning questionnaire comprises six questions about human functioning and is based on the conceptual framework - International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, (ICF) developed by the WHO in 2001. ICF rejects a medical model of disability that considers disability as a deficiency in the functioning of a body; rather, this conceptual framework is based on a bio-psycho-social approach that views disability as an interaction between a person's abilities (limitations in functioning) and environmental barriers (physical, social, cultural and legislative) that may limit a person's participation in public life (World Health Organization, 2001). Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) measures limitations in functioning in six basic universal actions - (seeing, hearing, mobility, cognition, communication, and self-care). One of the limitations of this tool is that it does not work well with individuals with psycho-social problems – it is unable to identify them effectively. To eliminate this problem, questions were added to the questionnaire about anxiety, depression, pain and fatigue; and its enhanced version was developed (WG-ES) that is used by the ILO. Notably, for the identification of disability (CRPD committee, Un agencies, the World Bank, International Disability Alliance, etc.), organizations use these very instruments.

In the course of the collection of information about the employment of the PWDs, along with the identification of disability, significant issue is the methods for the collection of information. Questions arise with respect to the methods of the collection of information as well as about the availability of such data. As has been mentioned above, main goal for the collection of data about the employment of PWDs for international organizations is the study/analysis of situation and the willingness to improve situation. Although, the data collection process may form the basis for the discrimination of the PWDs. Similar experience is described in the 2018 report published by Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC). Pursuant to the requirement from the audit, in one of the companies in India the organization's security service was tasked to develop a database of PWDs employed in the organization. The document describes the mistakes the security office made in the course of the data collection. They were carefully observing employees and their behavior to identify their disabilities, entered these individuals in certain lists without their consent and politely offered assistance in case of any need. It turned out that this offer was found offensive by the majority of individuals because some of them did not consider themselves as person with disability (DEOC, 2018). Presumably, this experience

should not be an exception since in many countries around the world employers do not have an established system for the collection of information about employed PWDs. Hence, there are no set procedures for the manner and ways for the collection of this information, or about the focus of this information and who should have access to it.

Employers may have a variety of reasons as the basis for their interest to collect data about employed PWDs. For instance, in many European states there is a system of quota for PWDs, and employers in the public as well as private sector are required to employ certain number of PWDs in specified conditions. In the USA quota rule is not used, although applicable legislation mandates government contractors to submit data about PWDs employed in their organizations. Hence, the development of an effective system for the collection of information about employed PWDs is a highly relevant topic; although, it is still a challenge for many organizations around the world.

Based on the analysis of practices, Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC) provides the following recommendations for the collection of information about the PWDs:



At the stage of the review of applications, prior to the interviews stage, information about a person's disability should be collected by means of the completion of a separate form. This information should serve the monitoring function only – it should support an organization in the analysis of the following data: the number PWDs who applied to a given position, the number of PWDs who started work, the number who were rejected and the reason for refusal (to rule out discrimination). This information helps the organization to increase the representation of PWDs and create a more inclusive working environment.



After an applicant passes an interview stage and is hired, more questions should be asked about their disability. For instance, what type of support they need, whom to contact in case of emergency, etc.



Importantly, the questionnaire should be filled out by all employees and not just a PWD. Although, it is worth noting that this should be voluntary and the will of the individuals who do not want to disclose their disability should be considered. At the same time, if a worker changes their mind, they should be given the possibility to disclose their disability at any time.



Collected information should be kept strictly confidential. It should be accessible to only specific designated individuals – this should be clearly detailed in an organization's policy.



It is important that the organization clearly demonstrates their policy for ensuring equal opportunities, to make sure that employees do not hide their disabilities and openly request from organization to adapt working environment.

The report *Collecting Global Employee Disability Data: The challenges and enablers for disability-smart organizations* published in 2021 by the Business Disability Forum notes that organizations across the world encounter two key problems when recording employed PWDs: (1) *procedural matters* – how the disability should be determined – in many cases, disability is not visible and (2) *human factors* – people may feel anxiety and discomfort due to the disclosure of health related information since they believe that this may jeopardize their career (Business Disability Forum, 2021). The same report addresses stigma in the society towards PWDs, especially those with psycho-social needs and hence individuals with such needs may not be willing to disclose information about their condition. Therefore, authors attach particular attention to the creation of psychological security and trust-based environment. Such environment is very important to ensure that employees feel comfortable when speaking about health related problems – the creation of supportive environment greatly depends on a worker's immediate supervisor. Used vocabulary and terms are crucial in the process of the collection of data about employed PWDs – it has to be in line with local as well as international legislation.

The guide developed by the United Nations Global Compact and the ILO focuses on the protection of the rights of PWDs in business, it emphasizes the importance of the collection of information by employers about employed PWDs. It is noted that majority of employers express readiness to regularly collect information about employed PWDs (United Nations Global Compact & International Labor Organization, 2017).

The importance of the collection of information about employed PWDs by employers and effective ways for the collection of information is discussed in a publication produced by the Government of the United Kingdom, Department of Work & Pensions, 2018. In the UK the Voluntary Reporting Framework developed by the government jointly with major employers and expert partners is in effect. The cooperation is aimed at supporting the organizations to record and voluntarily disclose information about matters of disability, mental health and general well-being of employees. It is known that international conventions, including, the CRPD, does not mandate business sector directly. The States parties' governments are responsible for the implementation of conventions. Respectively, they actively cooperate with the employers to promote the protection of the rights at workplaces stipulated by international conventions. The overview prepared by UK experts in 2017 recommends that employers should disclose more information about mental health and well-being of employees (Farmer & Stevenson, 2017). The same year the UK Government issues an ordinance that envisaged the cooperation with employers and the development of a special framework/network that would help employers to prepare information about disability and mental health of employees at workplaces (Government of the United Kingdom, Department of Work & Pensions, 2017). The cooperation framework envisaged the preparation of a guide for employers about how to ensure higher transparency in organizations. The mentioned document views reporting by employers about disability in two directions: (a) submission of a narrative report about how PWDs are hired and retained at workplaces and (b) the provision of quantitative indicators about individuals who consider

themselves PWDs or think that they have long history of physical and mental health problems. Information provided by employer with respect to “a” should concern such matters as: which specific procedures are envisaged in the process of hiring PWDs, what measures are taken when adapting work environment, support activities carried out with respect to the individuals with specific disabilities, etc. With respect to “b” – information may be collected by means of the completion of a special questionnaires by employees, as part of documentation maintained by the Human Resources Management Department, or by means of an anonymous survey. It is important to clearly inform employees about the aim of the collection of information. For the identification of disability, it is recommended to use a question in the document with the following wording: “do you think you have a disability or a chronic health related problem?”

The same approach is used in a document prepared by the UK Government with respect to mental health problems and general well-being – in this case, too, reporting by employers is envisaged in two directions: (a) the submission of a narrative report about the activities carried out in an organization to support mental health and well-being of employees and (b) results of a survey that measures employee well-being. In the narrative part employer overviews the activities that were directed at supporting mental health and well-being of employees, for instance, trainings to improve mental health, improvement of the employee care standards in an organization, etc. It is recommended to use the following questions for the assessment of employee well-being (Government of the United Kingdom, Department of Work & Pensions, 2017):

- how satisfied are you currently with your life?
- in your opinion, how much what you generally do in life matters?
- how happy did you feel yesterday?
- how much anxiety did you feel yesterday?

Furthermore, it is recommended to include in the questionnaire questions related to health, safety, environment and relationships, in particular, the publication recommends the following questions (Government of the United Kingdom, Department of Work & Pensions, 2017):

- overall, how satisfied are you with your job?
- how much would you recommend your job to another person?
- how would you generally assess your physical health?
- how would you generally assess your mental health?
- how much protected do you feel against various threats and physical risks in your work environment?
- how much support do you feel from your immediate supervisor?
- how much support do you feel from co-workers?
- how satisfied are you with your physical work environment?
- how much does your job give you the feeling that you are handling it well?

As can be seen, various different approaches are used for obtaining information about employed PWDs. International organizations as well as the governments of specific countries believe that the collection of statistical and narrative information about the employment of the PWDs is important for the analysis and the improvement of situation. The review of literature shows that the government is the main party responsible for the employment of PWDs and the collection of information in this direction, since, under international conventions, it is the state, not business sector that is responsible for the commitment with respect to the employment of the PWDs.

Special measures have not been undertaken in Georgia with respect to keeping the record of employed PWDs and the study of their needs at workplaces. The Revenue Service statistics is helpful for partially recording employed PWDs. Although, this picture is very incomplete since as has been mentioned above the existing system of assigning PWD status does not cover everyone with disability. As regards tax benefits, the system envisions individuals with severe and significant disability only, while overlooking individuals with moderate disabilities. Moreover, in Georgia the number of individuals, including PWDs, employed in an informal sector remains high. And lastly, these figures say nothing about the needs of PWDs at workplaces. According to the CSB data, as of the time of the research, 60 PWDs were working in the public sector.

2.2 Employment and the working environment

Ensuring decent work is central for the ILO. The ILO defines decent work as “productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity” (ILO, 1999). The decent work is a significant element of the quality of life and ILO is guided by the decent work agenda in relation to the employment of persons with disabilities.

The International Labor Organization defines the concept of decent work by the following six dimensions (ILO, 1999):



Opportunities for work: all persons who want work should be able to find work.



Work in conditions of freedom: it should be freely chosen, and workers may join workers' organizations.



Productive work: adequate earnings for workers.



Equity in work: no discrimination at work and in finding work.



Security at work: safeguard health, pensions and livelihoods, provide adequate protection in case of loss of work and livelihood.



Dignity at work: respectful treatment of workers.

The International Labor Organization collects information about employment according to these six indicators that were first presented in 2003 in Geneva at the Seventeenth International Conference of Labor Statisticians (ILO, 2003 a). These six dimensions of decent work notion designed by the ILO is applicable to all workers and acquires particular function in case of marginalized groups. As has been mentioned above, persons with disabilities belong to a marginalized group on the labor market around the world and their employment status requires considerable improvement in both developed and developing countries. Naturally, there are more problems in developing countries since persons with disabilities have few opportunities of employment on the open market due to high unemployment and high competition on the labor market.

The following may be listed as the most prevalent barriers with respect to the employment of PWDs:

- 1 ***suspicions and hesitation of employers*** – often employers are not convinced that PWDs may be good workers, they doubt their fitness to work and they can imagine PWDs in low paid jobs only (Bonaccio et al. 2020);
- 2 ***the lack of adequate education*** – persons with disabilities still have limited access to education – this may be due to non-inclusive learning environment, hyper care from parents, stigma in the society, etc. (Morris et al.,2014; Collins et al., 2012);
- 3 ***poverty*** – often, persons with disabilities live in poverty, due to major medical expenses incurred by families. Furthermore, often there are cases when PWDs are raised in state care institutions since their parents rejected them when they were little (Fisher & Shang, 2014);
- 4 ***stigmatization*** – neglect and marginalization by the society remains a significant problem for PWDs – in case of those whose disability is visible; individuals with psycho-social needs are particular target of stigmatization (Burnam, 2020);
- 5 ***inaccessible work environment and access road*** – often, due to unadapted work environment, unadapted public transport and infrastructure, PWDs are compelled to quit a hard-won job (Lindsay, 2011);

the lack of services for social and professional rehabilitation – PWDs still have limited access to services that are necessary for their social inclusion (Kaye et al. 2011).

As has been mentioned above, according to Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, ensuring non-discriminatory, equal environment for the employment of PWDs is a responsibility of the governments of states parties. Hence, a logical expectation arises that public sector institutions should be more accessible for PWDs than private ones. As for the difference between employment and work experience of PWDs in private and public organizations – it is hard to answer this question due to the lack of researches in this area; as for existing research data, they vary country by country and sometimes are mutually exclusive. For instance, according to a study implemented in Bosnia Herzegovina in 2018, employers in the public sector have more positive attitude towards employment of PWDs (Perućica, et al., 2018), while according to the research conducted in Canada in 2020, conversely, employers in the public sector express suspicion and concern with respect to the employment of PWDs (Bonaccio, S., et al., 2020).

Numerous recommendations have been developed for promoting inclusive working environment. In a guide prepared by the United Nations Global Compact and ILO on the protection of the rights of PWDs in business, particular emphasis is placed to the use of rights based approach in an organization (United Nations Global Compact & International Labor Organization, 2017). In order to develop the environment that is adapted to the needs of PWDs, an organization should in general be based on a rights based approach since it is impossible to protect human rights with respect to one group and not in respect to other groups. This means that a rights based approach should be introduced in general in an organization's policy and at the same time this should be clearly stipulated with respect to the PWDs. One of the ways for the creation of convenient environment based on the needs of PWDs employees is a regular self-assessment by an organization – analysis as to the extent of inclusiveness of working environment for PWDs; identification of the areas of the organizational policy and environment where their rights are breached the most. Furthermore, it is important that an organization's policy and procedures, in turn, to be conducive to the protection of their own rights by PWD employees – the system should envisage simple grievance and appeal procedures. Once a rights based policy and procedures are established in an organization, the next step is the creation of needs based convenient environment for PWDs considering their individual needs. Working environment should be conducive to effective performance, professional development and career advancement for PWDs, as required under the CRPD Article 27 (United Nations Global Compact & International Labor Organization, 2017).

The challenges related to the employment of PWDs reviewed above are manifested vividly in Georgia which is reflected in local researches and parliamentary and special reports of the Public Defender of Georgia – unadapted infrastructure, low competitiveness of PWDs on an open labor market, low access to quality education and required social and rehabilitation services, stereotypical attitude from the public and employers are considered main barriers for the employment of PWDs in Georgia. Situation in our country – existing secondary data – are reviewed below, in relation to main findings of the given research. It is worth noting that the analysis of the situation of PWDs specifically employed in the public sector has not been a subject of a dedicated research before.

III. Research design and methodology

3.1 Research goal and objectives

Main goal of the given research project is to facilitate the transformation of public service to an inclusive workplace that will be more open for the employment of PWDs. The research was conducted in two directions:

- ▶ the analysis of effective ways for keeping the record of PWDs employed in the public sector.
- ▶ examination of the factors that have impact on the employment and work of PWDs in the public service.

3.2 Used methods and research tools

The research was based on quantitative as well as qualitative research methods. As part of quantitative research online survey was performed, a questionnaire was developed (See Annex 1) that was based on a tool developed by the Washington Team and ILO - Labour Force Survey Disability Module (LFS-DM). As has been mentioned above, this questionnaire relies on the ICF conceptual framework for the identification of disability. Therefore, the same approach is used in our questionnaire – 1-12 questions of the questionnaire are aimed at establishing functional limitation of a respondent, based on ICF. While remaining questions are about the factors having impact on employment and working process. A questionnaire is made up of 31 closed questions.

A semi-structured interview and focus groups method were used in qualitative research. The goal of qualitative research was to perform in-depth analysis of the topics that have been identified in online surveys and whose in-depth examination was not possible given the specificity of quantitative research. A total of 32 interviews and 3 focus groups were held. The duration of an interview was 25-45 minutes, and of a focus group – 70-90 min. Individual and group interviews were held remotely – via telephone and the Zoom platform. A guide for interviews and focus groups was developed for each target group – guiding questions (See Annex 2).

3.3 Research sample and participants

The quantitative research was conducted with PWD working in the public sector. An available sample was used. The CSB data was used as target population. According to provided information, there were 60 PWDs employed in the public sector during the research period. A link to online survey was sent to 50 respondents – those who consented to take part in the research. Overall, 38 respondents took part in online survey. Based on the number of the participants of the research, sample error is 10%, hence we are unable to generalize conclusions. Research data will be presented not in percentages, rather, in natural numbers.

Respondents for qualitative survey were selected from the following target groups:

- 1 PWDs employed in the public sector – 13 respondents;
- 2 PWDs with the experience of employment in the public service who no longer work in this sector – 3 respondents;
- 3 Human resources management department employees from the public organizations where PWDs are working – 6 respondents;
- 4 immediate supervisors of PWDs – 5 respondents and
- 5 individuals with expert knowledge – 5 respondents.

Overall, 32 respondents took part in interviews. Furthermore, three focus groups were conducted: (1) with PWDs employed in the public service – 4 respondents and (2) with the human resources management department employees from those public institutions where PWDs are working – 5 respondents and (3) PWDs with expert knowledge – 5 participants. Overall, 14 individuals took part in focus groups. Participants for the qualitative survey were sampled based on target sampling. Research was conducted throughout Georgia. The analysis of quantitative data was based on descriptive statistics, as for qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis was used.

3.4 Research ethics

The research was conducted in full compliance with the principles of ethics. PWDs employed in the public service were engaged in the research only after their office HRM department employee had contacted them, informed them about the research and asked them to take part in the research. If the PWDs agreed to take part in the research, HR staff sent PWD contact information to research leader. Next, a researcher contacted PWDs – sent a letter via e-mail with detailed information about the research, explaining the confidentiality of data and providing a link to the survey. The same principle was used with all participants of the qualitative research.

Representatives of PWD organizations helped the research team in reaching PWDs with the experience of working in the public sector (who no longer work in the public service), in compliance with the principle described above.

3.5 Research limitation

As has been mentioned above, considering the limitations based on COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews and focus groups were conducted remotely. Although, information obtained via telephone interviews and in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted via Zoom platform was exhaustive. Distant communication was not inconvenient for respondents, they expressed their views freely.

As part of the available sample, the respondents do not include individuals with psycho-social problems and deaf individuals. Gender balance could not be maintained – majority of research participants are women.

IV. Key findings



Identification of disability and types

38 participants were engaged in the quantitative research – of those, 73% were women and 27% men; the most prevalent age was 30 to 49 years. Majority of respondents (n=24) have more than 6 years of the experience of working in an organization and majority (n=21) work on the same position where they first started. Almost all respondents (n=35) have a PWD status. The survey has showcased that the most prevalent functional disability among the participants of the research is related to movement (n=25); next – vision (n=9). Among those surveyed there were very few who has problems related to hearing (n=3), problems related to memory, concentration of attention (n=3) and communication in the mother tongue (n=2). It is worth noting that certain respondents (n=10) note that over the past six months they often have felt anxiety, low mood, nervous and depression. As has been mentioned above, in a questionnaire used during survey, we did not rely on medical diagnosis to identify disability, rather, we used ICF conceptual framework as is provided in the tool developed by the Washington team and ILO - Labour Force Survey Disability Module (LFS-DM). As can be seen, by means of these questions those limitations can be ascertained that are related to medical diagnosis of individuals. It is worth noting that the questions aimed at determining psycho-social needs (Questions 11 and 12 in a questionnaire, See Annex 1) show that certain respondents quite often, and others - on a daily basis experience problems related to mood - according to the aforementioned questionnaire, the condition of the respondents who refer to such intensity of psycho-emotional problems, is worthy of attention. The scale and design of the given study does not enable us to draw a conclusion – whether this condition is related to a respondent's disability, COVID-19 pandemic or another factor. Existing researches evidence that PWDs often experience psycho-emotional problems resulting from their condition (Koca-Atabey et al, 2011). Furthermore, numerous research show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health of individuals has deteriorated considerably, not only among PWDs (Bonaccio et al., 2021). As has been mentioned above, our research in this direction does not enable us to draw relevant conclusions, although we can say that using the questions formulated based on ICF a clear idea is developed with respect to functional limitation of respondents – the answers show the type of functional limitation of a respondent. Employer gets necessary information about general needs of a worker without precise medical diagnosis.



The factors that have impact on employment

Majority of the participants of quantitative research (n=15) believe that during the job seeking process the most important factors are their professional competence and an employer's attitude towards PWDs. Furthermore, access to transportation between workplace and home (n=11), increased access to aids in a working space and higher access to environment (n=11), workplace environment that is adapted to the needs of PWDs (n=11) were listed among significant factors. The same factors are identified in the qualitative research data. According to other research conducted in Georgia, too, unadapted infrastructure/facilities represent the most significant obstacle interfering in the employment and retaining a job by PWDs (Sumbadze et al, 2015; Makharadze et al., 2018).

The research has revealed that in the process of job seeking majority of respondents (n=33) received considerable support from family members. With respect to employment and work, support provided by family members was identified in interviews conducted with employed PWDs as well – due to unadapted public transport and infrastructure, individuals with the limitation of movement and eyesight impaired individuals often are able to get to a workplace with the help of family members –

“If not for this luxury and support, I would face obstacles in many areas. Firstly, with respect to movement. Well, the environment is more or less adapted, but adapted buses are not available everywhere, or bus stops are not adapted to accessible transport in every location, etc. I get support from my family in all respects, I manage to overcome these problems thanks to their assistance, like getting off a wheelchair, etc. My father helps me with this. Since a personal assistant's institution is not developed if not for my father I would not be able to handle anything (a female interview respondent, PWD).”

“From the perspective of professional development, personally I am engaged in all activities but I would not be able to manage this without the support from family members (female interview respondent, PWD).”

“I am developing, there are no interferences, although this is possible only owing to those individuals around me (respondent female, PWD).”



Adaptation to a working environment

It is good that the majority of respondents (n=34) do not encounter difficulties with respect to work schedule, for the majority of those the entire workplace space is available (n=27), at least more than half of them are able to use all WCs (n=21), while majority of them are able to use information designed for employees (n=27), although, all spaces of gathering are accessible to only half of the respondents (n=20). The data are logically associated with the fact that majority of surveyed individuals had difficulties with movement. The qualitative research has revealed that in the majority of cases where a working environment of a PWD needs to be adapted, many of their needs remain unmet. –

“For instance, in our system any employee is able to sit and work at any workstation and use a computer program, I am unable to do the same. I am attached to the same computer (where my software is recorded) which causes certain difficulties with movement, since if I sit at another desktop, I will have to download the software, etc. A PWD needs huge support from an employer to enable the person to perform in a quality and good manner (a male respondent, PWD).”



Professional advancement and the impact of disability

Half of the surveyed respondents (n=21) noted that their functional limitations do not have an impact on their professional advancement, the same trend was identified in the qualitative research – interview and focus group participants said that their PWD status and related limitations do not interfere in the performance of duties nor in their relations with co-workers. Although, they think that disability in general has an impact on their life, noting that there are “no limited abilities”. Majority of those who took part in the survey (n=25) note that if not for their disability, they would have a different professional career. A disability is particularly felt by those who have acquired this condition – this is evidenced by numerous researches (Makharadze et al., 2018). This is confirmed by our research participant as well –

“Certainly, disability has an impact, I received trauma at the age of 17 and became wheelchair user, was unable to continue education and was able to do so only after 8 years. They contacted me from one of the colleges and offered vocational education. Since then, my life has changed. I became psychologically empowered, an acquired profession has also been useful. Even now, many things are difficult for me, but I already have great experience (a female interview respondent, PWD).”

The interviews with PWDs have revealed that when planning the working process health condition and psychological specificity of PWD should be taken into account since in a number of cases they may be taking certain medication that may have side effects on an organism or they may have frail health compared to others –

“I would like to say one thing, there are periods when I have weak immunity therefore sometimes I feel physically unwell, I always have support from my Office in this respect and if I am physically unfit to come to work, i.e. this will be taken as an excusable reason and this is the type of support I receive. This is rare, but is still very helpful. In general, the attitude of co-workers towards me and towards others is good (female interview respondent, PWD).”

“When I first got this, I had certain complexes, I imagined things, I thought I had to try harder to present myself to make sure that there was not obstacle from leadership and office with respect to work. I had this complex (female interview respondent, PWD).”

The research has showcased that research participants feel comfortable at a workplace. Majority of respondents (n=30) note that they have equal opportunities for professional advancement at work, if their professional qualifications are relevant. Although, it should also be noted that due to health condition, research participants are not always able to take part in various trainings, sometimes training attendance is related to some objective problems, such as transportation, unadapted infrastructure, etc. Majority of the respondents (n=37) regard that they are treated in a dignified manner and with respect, and majority of the respondents do not experience different treatment either (n=33).



Attitudes from employers

The respondents note that only few employers are ready to employ PWDs. To a question how much ready employers are to hire PWDs almost half of respondents (n=16) had trouble with answering a question, while others note that only some employers (n=8) and very few employers are willing (n=8) to employ PWDs. Furthermore, majority of respondents (n=13) had trouble with answering a question related to the willingness of employees to work together with PWDs. Majority of respondents (n=13) think that for the majority it is acceptable to work with PWDs, and few of them think that this is acceptable only to some employees (n=7). In a qualitative research, based on own experience, respondents shared opinion that the readiness of the administration in public institutions to take into account the needs of PWDs was higher. Their needs were somewhat considered in private organizations as well, although, there were often cases when during making significant decisions basic needs of PWDs were ignored – for instance, at one

of the banks a decision was made to move a cafeteria to the floor that was inaccessible to a PWD, and a small room was allocated for this individual where the person had to have lunch alone. Furthermore, the fact that a PWD was able to come to work in a sports shoes rather than high heels, was regarded a benefit – *“You should be happy for such benefit, you and are able to come to work in sports shoes”*. It was further mentioned that when a PWD is employed in a private organization, this is often used for promotion of a company – for instance, one of the respondent who worked at a bank always worked at the head office and the person’s desk was placed in a prominent place, while their colleagues would periodically be assigned to different branches, according to the organization’s policy. One of the respondents recalled the case when an employer directly told the person that they had been hired because of their disability –

“I wanted to work at a back office but they refused, saying that they had hired me to show off they employed a PWD and wanted to make sure everyone was able to see me (female interview respondent, PWD).”

PWD respondents with work experience noted that the awareness of employers and the public in general and their attitudes, compared to prior years, has improved considerably. One of the respondents recalled participation in a competition for a telephone operator’s vacancy 8 years ago at one of the public institutions –

“This was not a pleasant process: it involved cynical attitude, it seemed that it was more formal than result oriented (a female interview respondent).”

The same respondent notes that during that period, the person often heard from employers the phrases such as *“we would like to hire you but we do not have adapted environment”*, *“we do not have adequate environment for the disabled, people like you”*. Our research participants agree to a view that it is important to raise the awareness of public and their awareness for changing stereotypical attitudes and stigma, and PWDs can play significant role in this process –

“There are stereotypes and I had huge problem at school with wearing glasses, everyone would point fingers at me. Although I realized that we, PWDs have to change these attitudes. For instance, a new employee was very much surprised when they saw my program that magnifies the screen considerably. I explained to them very simply what was the reason. That person really did not know. We, ourselves, have to take this easy. Now my child has way less problems, while I had problems in the yard with kids and at school as well. Now there are less problems like this (female interview respondent, PWD).”

Qualitative research results have shown that often employers are willing to hire a PWD although they are unable to fully conduct this process adequately which may turn into a humiliating situation for a PWD. One of the respondents recalls this type of experience –

“Originally they did not say either “yes” or “no”. I knew they had to add a position, but the process was so much delayed that I got suspicious. When I would call to inquire, they would ask such questions: “if there is a blackout, will you be able to come to the fourth floor?”. Of course it would be hard for me but I would not decline this job because of this reason. Ultimately, I was compelled to ask them to offer such a position where “I would not hamper anyone” due to my condition. Later, there was an opening in a passes and registration office and they offered the position, with apologies. This meant working not by my specialty but was better than nothing and I accepted. The interview went on well, although I was unable to get a job in a department I wanted and now I do not work according to my specialty. Still, I am content that I have been hired and I have not had a problem since then (a female interview respondent, PWD).”

Significant impact of the attitude of those around a person on a person’s behavior, own attitude towards oneself and self-assessment has been reinforced by a number of researches and numerous social psychology theories (Pesu et al. 2016). This impact is even greater among vulnerable groups.

“The stereotypes still exist. I try to destroy those stereotypes myself. Since I am active, these stereotypes have less impact on me, I also have experience and handle. But not everyone is able to address environment actively like me, many individuals have trouble with adapting in an environment (a male interview respondent, PWD).”

Unequal conditions

The fact that, PWDs generally face unequal conditions compared to other individuals is noted in numerous local researches, as well as underscored in the reports of the Public Defender (The Public Defender of Georgia, 2020). The same trend has been identified in our research – more than half of those surveyed (n=23) regard that in case of losing a job and when looking for a new job they will not enjoy equal opportunities compared to others (non-PWD). Qualitative research has revealed that the majority of respondents, and especially those who have functional limitations from birth, had considerable problems with receiving education, which was even more prominent with respect to higher education – and this is a serious problem for employment as well as promotion and career growth. –

“When I was looking for a job, higher education was a requirement everywhere and I did not have it, this was a great impediment, but you know this is still related to my disability situation not directly but still. This is why I was unable to get higher degree than high school education. When the vacancy was announced, this is why I did not meet the eligibility condition. Please note this, as it is a great barrier (female interview respondent, PWD).”

“Since I do not have a university diploma, I am unable to advance, I was not promoted to a higher position and am unable to develop, this also worries me, but I hope they will take into account my performance and will reason based on this (female interview respondent, PWD).”

Professional competence and having the skills relevant to a vacancy were listed as most important for the employment of PWDs during the interviews with the representatives of human resource departments and immediate supervisors of PWDs. Respondents have underscored that recruitment in the public service is conducted according to the established rules – a vacancy announcement is posted on a website administered by the CSB and any individual is able to apply. The special committee determines the conformity of an applicant with qualifications framework and this is the basis for inviting applicants for an interview. Due to inadequate education, PWDs often are unable to advance farther than the first stage of the competition, since higher education requirement is common to almost all vacancies, and PWDs rarely hold university degree. With respect to examining the issue of employment of PWDs, the appropriateness of workspace with their needs is a significant topic. The research has demonstrated once again that physical space often is not accessible for individuals with movement and eyesight issues. Survey participants have noted that adapting old buildings is often very hard, sometimes impossible. Situation is much better with respect to furniture and necessary supplies. Respondents note that they are equipped with necessary furniture and equipment at a workplace. Interviews conducted with the HRM unit and immediate supervisors of PWDs have revealed that sometimes they try to “find a more suitable job for” a person with disability –

“They found a position at the records management office for this girl (PWD) so that she would not have to move a lot, they taught her a special software and her work is smooth (female interview participant, employer).”

Although, as has been mentioned above, due to such approach, a PWD may end up in a position that is not relevant to their profession or their wish, yet, they do not reject a job since they prefer to work at that position than to be unemployed. There are jobs in the public sector (for instance, at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defense) that involve the requirement to pass specific normative standards, this is a mandatory requirement for everyone and naturally, if a PWD is unable to pass the standard, the person will not be considered for the job, unlike others. The interviews with supervisors of PWD have revealed that adapting a job to a PWD is perceived as something usual and an immediate supervisor of a PWD considers it to be their duty –

“For instance, I gave an assignment twice and the person failed to fulfill it. I give an assignment and know they will not be able to deliver. This would be discrimination, unless I adapt environment and assignment to this person. I use this approach. The person should be able to perform. For instance, I prepare answer to 10 letters a day, it does not say anywhere what the standard is and if they assign to me 100 letters, they know I will not be able to handle? The same is in case of a PWD. If I give an assignment that a person is unable to fulfil this is my responsibility (male interview respondent, employer).”

Some supervisors of PWDs share the opinion that the design of the vacancies where PWDs would be employed should be a specific focus. Since environment is often not so much adapted to PWDs, research participants note that working of PWDs in some position is associated with numerous problems that ultimately impacts the effectiveness of their performance –

“Based on the setup of Mayor’s office, sometimes e.g., infrastructure department staff make frequent site visits. This may be an impediment in case of an individual with certain limitation. Therefore, it depends on a limitation and depends on a job. such problems are less likely to occur in administrative, culture and social units (female interview respondent, employer).”



Remuneration

Remuneration is one of the significant aspects of decent employment of PWDs (ILO, 2015). Almost half of the respondents of our online survey (n=21) note that salaries are not sufficient to enable them to live a decent life. Although, qualitative research results show that the low salary is not related to disability, rather - it is a general issue of salary rates within an institution. It is worth noting that according to researches conducted in Georgia PWDs often have to quit job due to low salary since considerable part of their salary is spent on transportation and other costs that other individuals without limitations do not have (Makharadze et al, 2018). PWDs who took part in in-depth interview highlighted similar problems:

“...Tax should not be applicable to a person with disability, for under GEL 6,000 or higher. We have numerous needs, for instance, another employee will use a transport which is very cheap, while I must take my own car, there is no choice. I have higher expenses for hygiene care and other needs, and generally, our salary should not be taxed... especially that prices for everything are increasing (female respondent, PWD).”



Job satisfaction

Overwhelming majority of surveyed individuals (n=35) are satisfied with their job. It can be said based on in-depth interviews with PWDs that their job satisfaction is mostly due to favorable working environment and positive relations with employees and supervisors –

“Since I have met them and started working here, I felt absolutely different, normal attitude towards me (interview respondent).”

“... Well, I always felt attention and willingness to help from others. There have been cases when a supervisor passed by and picked up and gave to me an item that I had dropped without noticing it, and the supervisor would not do the same in case of a regular co-worker (female interview participant, PWD).”



Collection of information about PWDs

Considerable portion of qualitative research was the determination of the views of participants about PWDs employed in the public sector, about effective ways and importance of collection of statistical information. All respondents agree that a PWD status is personal information and when collecting any type of data about PWDs the right to the privacy of personal information should be protected strictly. Although everyone notes that information about basic needs of a PWD is important for employers –

“I believe that significant information should be known to employer, maybe a person has epilepsy and may faint, they should know this to be able to help them (female focus group participant, employer).”

“In my opinion, employer should know upfront what will be the impact of a limitation or a condition of a PWD on job performance and whether the creation of special conditions would be necessary (female interview respondent, PWD).”

An individual who should be given access to information has been identified as an important matter – majority of respondents note that in agreement with a PWD, their immediate supervisor should have general information. Research participants underscored that consent should be obtained from a person with disability about the disclosure of information and every step should be agreed with them –

“PWD status is personal information and it should be disclosed with caution. HR representative obtained a special permission and consent to the disclosure of information about me for this research. Perhaps this is the most appropriate method that should be used to provide information about PWDs (male interview respondent, PWD).”

Research participants are of the opinion that at the time of hiring a specific questionnaire should be used and every employee should be required to complete it, not only a PWD –

“Filling out this questionnaire should be a requirement for everyone, I do not think it is advisable to distinguish. When concluding a contract, everyone should fill it out, a person with disability, as well as those without disability. A person will submit a certificate of health, criminal record and it will be clear. There can be a common field for everyone and they can select a form applicable to a person (a female interview respondent, employer).”

The research has revealed that recording of PWDs takes place in public institutions although not in a systemic and organized manner –

“We do not use a dedicated survey or recording for this. We record a PWD at the time of employment. They have to submit a certificate and we know. If there is no change, we do not update. We know their numbers, details. We have this information based on documentation from recruitment. This information is for internal use, furthermore, if a relevant organization needs this information, we provide it, without disclosing name and last name (female interview respondent, employer).”

Research participants underscored that this information should be used for the improvement of working conditions for a PWD employee and to better adapt workplace to their needs. As for the improvement of statistical data about PWDs, it is important to organize state databases and to have cooperation among government agencies – for instance, any institution can solicit information from the Revenue Service about PWDs employed in the public institutions that can be broken down by sectors. Although, since there is no accurate statistics of PWDs in the country and informal employment is also quite prevalent practice (although not in the public sector) statistics received from the Revenue Service will be different from reality.



The methods for the improvement of situation and the role of the public sector

Research participant PWDs note that the employment of PWDs is a complex matter and involves access to quality education, health, and social protection services. As of present, PWDs have difficulty to compete on the labor market because they do not have access to quality education or required medical and social services. Therefore, it is possible that during recruitment, especially in the public sector, to take into account existing situation and use somewhat simplified requirements towards PWDs –

“You have not invested any costs for me and now you say I have low qualifications, and are telling me to work as a manager at a call center, I would work as a manager if you had spent more, done more for me... (a male focus group participant, PWD).”

Given the complexity of employment, it is impossible to speak about the improvement of the employment of PWDs in the public sector alone – the same factors have impact on the employment in the public sector as generally on the employment of the persons with disabilities. Although, in the public sector, additional rules are applicable, some of which may be considered as conducive to the employment of PWDs and others on the contrary, as those creating additional barrier. For instance, the fact that the UN CRPD is applicable in Georgia since 2014 raises expectation that the government will dedicate more efforts to the employment of PWDs as part of the support of the employment of PWDs. At the same time, since employment in the public sector is related to highly formalized rules and bureaucratic procedures, it may be more inaccessible for PWDs. An idea came up during a focus group with PWDs that public sector can be rendered more flexible and certain rules may be revisited in case of PWDs, for instance, where necessary requirement is to have specific education or skill, this requirement may not be mandatory for PWDs. In exchange, PWDs can be offered professional development training at a workplace to render the person absolutely relevant for a specific job.

Research participants note that employers, including those in the public sector, are often not informed about the regulations and rules applicable in relation to the employment of PWDs, for instance, about the rule of reasonable accommodation of a workplace – *“An absolutely simple change can be used to enhance labour efficiency – adapt a person and environment to each other”*. They think that it is necessary to raise employers’ awareness about this. Human Resources representatives who took part in focus group noted that it would be good if they have a consultant or if a somewhat unified rules are developed with respect to the employment of PWDs and their support at workplace. In this respect, they think that the CSB can play an important role –

“The Civil Service Bureau that coordinates legislative and other matters in the public service system, may play a role in enhancing inclusiveness of our institutions. For instance, it can organize employee awareness raising training, trainings to enhance qualification of PWDs, reflecting PWD matters in an organization’s policy documents. For instance, the details of an evacuation plan that would factor in the matters of PWDs – these matters should be discussed (female focus group participant, employer).”

Research participants also believe that the public sector can boost the motivation of employment among PWDs –

“Vacancies of the public institutions are posted on hr.gov.ge and the announcement text never has a statement “we welcome applicants with disabilities”. In foreign countries’ vacancies I have often seen such explicit provision, it serves as an incentive, compels a PWD to apply. Nihilism is prevalent among PWDs: “who will hire me, who would want me” – I have often heard this phrase from PWDs, even from those who have certain qualification (female focus group participant, PWD).”

As regards the collection of information about employed PWDs research participants agree that employers should hold information about the needs of PWDs. Although they note that this information should be confidential and be used only for the creation of necessary working environment for PWDs. With respect to specific ways for data collection, survey participants do not have a clear vision, although, again, CSB is viewed as the entity that can play positive role in the public sector.

V. Key conclusions and recommendations

Based on empirical research data and the analysis of relevant international & local literature, we can draw the following conclusions:

- In Georgia, the means for recording the employment of PWDs are not unified, while the statistics are not organized. For the creation of a unified database of employed PWDs CSB relies on data provided from public organizations, although these data are not complete since there is no unified established rule for data collection. International experience shows that the state actively cooperates with public and private employers, *on a voluntary basis*, for the creation of an updated database about disability, mental health and well-being of employees.
- International experience shows that when collecting data about employee disability, mental health and well-being, main goal of employers is to meet the needs of employees and to offer better working conditions to them.
- International experience shows that obtaining information from an employee about their physical and mental health is voluntary. Employees disclose this information when they are sure about the goal of data collection and at the same time they are convinced that with the disclosure of this information they do not jeopardize their career.
- International experience shows that data about physical and mental health and well-being of employees is collected from every employee and not only from PWDs. Participants of our research are of the same opinion.
- International experience shows that the protection of the rights of PWDs at workplace and the creation of environment adapted to their needs is possible only when an organization generally relies on a human rights based approach – it is impossible to care for the rights of a certain group and ignore others.
- Individuals with the limitation of movement is dominant among PWDs employed in the public service in Georgia. Public sector employers primarily imply individuals with the limitation of movement when referring to PWDs.
- An ICF theoretical framework based questionnaire developed as part of the research has revealed key limitations in the functioning of respondents related to their disability. Respectively, the mentioned questionnaire enables an employer to develop a clear idea about an employee's needs, without a medical diagnosis.
- A questionnaire based in ICF theoretical framework has identified psycho-emotional problems in certain respondents, that are presumably missed by employers.

- In public institutions where PWDs are working efforts are made to create relevant working environment for PWDs. Although, these actions are a response to a specific situation and are not part of a consistent policy directed towards the creation of inclusive working environment.
- Employers in the public service are of the opinion that it is important to raise awareness of employees about disability. In their view, coordinated and unified work in this direction is necessary.
- In case when a workplace of a person with disability requires considerable adaptation this often cannot be performed to a full extent – a significant challenge is the accessibility of old buildings for wheelchair users. The movement of blind individuals remains a problem. Situation is better with respect to the provision of necessary furniture and supplies.
- Employees of public institutions and immediate supervisors of PWDs realize that often they have to adapt the working environment and schedule to the needs of PWDs – this is perceived normal. First and foremost, an immediate supervisor of a PWD worker should be informed about his/her needs and working environment and schedule will be adapted with the support of an immediate supervisor.
- PWDs employed in the public sector are content with their job, with the relations with co-workers and immediate supervisors. They believe that like others, they have a possibility of career advancement – although the number of PWDs who actually go through this path is very low. Furthermore, there is a prevalent opinion that in case of losing a job it will be harder for them to find a new job compared to others (non-PWDs).
- Employment is so important for PWDs that in a number of cases they accept whatever job is offered – to a considerably lower position and work that is less interesting for them since they think it is better than being unemployed.
- professional development opportunities at work are provided to PWDs along with others although there are cases when due to health condition they are unable to participate in trainings, or trainings are held in a place that is not accessible to them.
- PWDs believe that disability has an impact on their life – if it were not for disability, they would have a different professional career.
- PWDs employed in the public service receive salary adequate to their position, like others. Although, these salaries are mostly not enough for living a decent life. Compared to individuals without disability, they spend more time on transportation to work (they usually are unable to use public transport). Furthermore, they have considerably higher medical expenses.

- ▶ Public sector jobs are not as much accessible to PWDs due to high requirements – in the majority of cases requirements include higher education which is relatively rare among PWDs. Higher education is also important for professional advancement in the public service which is also a problem for the majority of PWDs.
- ▶ The factors that have an impact on the employment in the public sector are generally considered main barriers for the employment of PWDs – lower competitiveness on the open labor market (compared to others, less professional skills and competence of PWDs), unadapted infrastructure, stereotypical views and stigma in the society (especially towards individuals with psycho-social needs). Barriers have been alleviated although they still pose considerable obstacle in the employment of PWDs.
- ▶ Special efforts are not used to attract PWDs to the vacancies in the public sector.
- ▶ Public agencies have less cooperation with one another with respect to the employment of PWDs in the public sector. For instance, we almost never see the cooperation with the Employment Support Agency supported employment program, vocational college, or universities.

Based on the aforementioned, it is expedient to undertake the following steps:

- ▶ The state should serve as a leader for the collection of indicators of employment of PWDs and their needs at workplaces, at least in the public sector (although, it is advisable if they also cooperate with private organizations in this direction) – since the government is responsible for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is advisable to consider best practices of foreign states in this direction.
- ▶ As a first step, a cooperation platform/framework should be established where employers will be engaged in order to regularly update data about disability, mental health and well-being of their employees. The CSB can lead this platform. It is important to analyze the views of employers, since their involvement should only be voluntary.
- ▶ The following should be performed on a special online platform (which may be administered by the CSB) on an annual basis: (1) the provision of quantitative data – the number of individuals in an organization who regard themselves as PWDs, and number of individuals who took part in announced competitions, reasons for rejection etc. and (2) the provision of a narrative report – what has the organization done for PWDs, for the improvement of mental health and well-being of employees. The data should be collected according to the tools used by the WHO and ILO, described in the given report. In light of the social system in the country, along with questionnaires based on ICF theoretical framework, the questionnaire should contain a question – whether a respondent has a PWD status.

- ▶ Every employee should fill out a special questionnaire when starting a job, at the time of signing an agreement; although, disclosure of information about physical and mental health should be voluntary. It is important to regularly update this information - perhaps via online survey.
- ▶ It is important that all involved parties realize the voluntary nature of disclosure of information and this should be reflected in an organization's policy documents – employers as well as employees should be well informed about the goal of the collection of personal data so that they are willing to disclose personal information related to physical and mental health. They should know for sure who will have access to this information and be sure that information disclosed by them will be kept confidential.
- ▶ Employers as well as employees should be able to see an adequate feedback received commensurate to disclosed information – it is important to plan steps parallel to the collection of data according to identified needs, for instance, organizing training programs according to identified needs, efforts dedicated to the improvement of working conditions of a specific employee, enhancement of professional qualifications of a specific individual, etc.
- ▶ The members of the platform should be convened on an annual basis, to analyze key challenges and share experience.
- ▶ Importantly, employers should realize the importance of inclusive working environment and of operation based on the rights based approach – the platform can organize specific training programs, seminars on this topic.
- ▶ It is important to integrate rights based approach and inclusive working environment in an organization's policy documents. At the same time, an organization may have a specific strategy for supporting employment of PWDs and supporting them on a workplace – this may entail various measures, among them:
 - ▶ every vacancy announcement can contain a note – “candidates with disabilities are welcome”;
 - ▶ extensive analysis of a job description and simplification of requirements as much as possible so that PWDs are also able to meet them (since to date PWDs have unequal access to the opportunities of education and professional development);
 - ▶ when vacancies are announced, actively look for PWD candidates – dissemination of information with the support of the Employment Support Agency specialists, at vocational colleges, universities, and NGOs;
 - ▶ organize training programs focused on the needs of a new PWD employee;
 - ▶ provision of medical insurance package for a PWD employee that best considers their needs;
 - ▶ if necessary, consider the possibility of transportation from home to work and vice versa in case it is a considerable problem for a PWD.

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Annexes

Annex #1

Online Survey Questionnaire

Hello,

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Disability Research Center (DRC), in cooperation with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and the UNDP and the UK Government support, is performing a research. Main goal of the research is to establish and analyze the factors that have impact on sustainable employment of PWDs in the public sector.

Given that you are a person with disability working in the public sector we would like to ask you to provide sincere answers to the questions provided below. Respondents' answers are confidential, only key researcher will have access to those, answers will be analyzed as group data, it will be impossible to identify answers by specific respondents in the research report. Data will be used solely for research purposes.

The questions relate to your working process as well as your employment experience. It will take about 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

1. The organization you are working in
2. How long have you been working at this organization?
 - ▶ Less than a year
 - ▶ 1 to 2 years
 - ▶ 2 to 3 years
 - ▶ 3 to 4 years
 - ▶ 4 to 5 years
 - ▶ 5 years and more
3. Are you currently in the same position where you started?
 - ▶ I work on the same position
 - ▶ I work on a higher position
 - ▶ I work on a lower position
 - ▶ I work on another position but of the same rank
 - ▶ Other_____
4. Do you have PWD status
 - ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
5. Do you have eyesight difficulties, even if you wear glasses?
 - ▶ I have no difficulty at all
 - ▶ I have certain difficulties
 - ▶ I have considerable difficulties
 - ▶ I cannot see at all
 - ▶ I do not want to answer
 - ▶ I find it difficult to answer

6. Do you have hearing difficulties even if you are wearing a hearing aid?
- ▶ I have no difficulty at all
 - ▶ I have certain difficulties
 - ▶ I have considerable difficulties
 - ▶ I cannot hear at all
 - ▶ I do not want to answer
 - ▶ I find it difficult to answer
7. Do you have difficulties while walking and going up the stairs?
- ▶ I have no difficulty at all
 - ▶ I have certain difficulties
 - ▶ I have considerable difficulties
 - ▶ I cannot walk at all
 - ▶ I do not want to answer
 - ▶ I find it difficult to answer
8. Do you have difficulties related to memory or the concentration of attention?
- ▶ I have no difficulty at all
 - ▶ I have certain difficulties
 - ▶ I have considerable difficulties
 - ▶ I cannot remember or concentrate at all
 - ▶ I do not want to answer
 - ▶ I find it difficult to answer
9. Do you have difficulties with self-care, such as, for instance, taking a bath or getting dressed?
- ▶ I have no difficulty at all
 - ▶ I have certain difficulties
 - ▶ I have considerable difficulties
 - ▶ I cannot take care of myself at all
 - ▶ I do not want to answer
 - ▶ I find it difficult to answer
10. Do you have difficulties with communication in your mother tongue, for instance, people cannot understand what you are saying or you do not understand what others are saying?
- ▶ I have no difficulty at all
 - ▶ I have certain difficulties
 - ▶ I have considerable difficulties
 - ▶ I am not capable of verbal communication at all
 - ▶ I do not want to answer
 - ▶ I find it difficult to answer
11. Over the past 6 months, how often have you felt anxiety, nervousness and worry?
- ▶ Never
 - ▶ Several times
 - ▶ Several times a month
 - ▶ Several times a week
 - ▶ Every day
 - ▶ I do not want to answer
 - ▶ I find it difficult to answer

12. Over the past 6 months, how often have you been in low mood, depressive?

- ▶ Never
- ▶ Several times
- ▶ Several times a month
- ▶ Several times a week
- ▶ Every day
- ▶ I do not want to answer
- ▶ I do not know

13. Which factor would help you the most in finding a job during the job seeking process (before starting working at this organization), select from the options listed below (recall your experience)? **Please circle three most important answers.**

- ▶ Better professional qualifications/skills;
- ▶ Better access to transportation from home to work and from work to home;
- ▶ Support in the seeking a relevant job – “more information about career planning” – where they can start a job, what opportunities are on the current employment market, etc.
- ▶ Highly positive attitudes from employer towards PWDs;
- ▶ Higher access to aids and environment at workplace;
- ▶ More flexible working schedule or assignments adapted to your needs;
- ▶ Working environment that is better adapted to your needs;
- ▶ Other_____
- ▶ I do not want to answer
- ▶ I find it hard to answer

14. How much did you get support from your family members in the job seeking process?

- ▶ They were very supportive
- ▶ They were somewhat supportive
- ▶ They were not supportive at all
- ▶ I do not want to answer
- ▶ I find it difficult to answer

15. Do you have difficulties with your working schedule?

- ▶ I have considerable difficulties
- ▶ I have certain difficulties
- ▶ I have no difficulties at all – I do not need to adapt a schedule
- ▶ I do not have difficulties, since the employer has already adapted the schedule to my needs
- ▶ Other_____
- ▶ I do not want to answer
- ▶ I find it difficult to answer

16. At your current workplace do you have difficulties in performing your job duties, due to unadapted working environment?

- ▶ I have significant difficulties
- ▶ I have certain difficulties
- ▶ I have no difficulties at all – I do not need to adapt a schedule
- ▶ I do not have difficulties, since the employer has already adapted the schedule to my needs
- ▶ Other_____
- ▶ I do not want to answer
- ▶ I find it difficult to answer

17. Are you able to do the following at your organization:

- ▶ Move throughout an entire space, on all floors
- ▶ Use all common gathering spaces
- ▶ Use all WCs
- ▶ Review all information designed for employees

18. In your opinion, how much your disability impacts your career advancement at your workplace?

- ▶ It has significant positive impact
- ▶ I do not want to answer
- ▶ It has significant negative impact
- ▶ I find it difficult to answer
- ▶ It has no impact at all

19. In your view, how much are employers willing to hire PWDs?

- ▶ Majority of them are
- ▶ Other_____
- ▶ Only some are
- ▶ Do not want to answer
- ▶ Very few are
- ▶ Difficult to answer
- ▶ No one is

20. In your opinion, how much do people want to work alongside PWDs

- ▶ Majority of them do
- ▶ Other_____
- ▶ Only some do
- ▶ Do not want to answer
- ▶ Very few do
- ▶ Difficult to answer
- ▶ No one does

21. In your opinion, when during job search, do you, as a person with disability, enjoy equal opportunity compared to other candidates (non-PWDs)?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

22. In your view, if it were not for your disability, would you have different professional career?
- ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
23. Are you able to have a decent life based on your remuneration?
- ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
24. In your view, with respect to career advancement, are you given equal opportunity compared to your co-workers (non-PWDs)?
- ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
25. In your opinion, do you enjoy equal opportunities compared to your co-workers (non-PWDs) with respect to job stability?
- ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
26. In your opinion, in case of losing a job, will you enjoy equal opportunities compared to others (non-PWDs) in search for a new job?
- ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
27. In your view, are your co-workers treating you with respect and dignity?
- ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
28. In your view, are you, being a person with disability, treated differently by co-workers?
- ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
29. How satisfied are you with your job?
- ▶ I am highly satisfied
 - ▶ I am satisfied
 - ▶ I am dissatisfied
 - ▶ I am very dissatisfied
 - ▶ Do not want to answer
 - ▶ Difficult to answer
30. Your age
- ▶ 18-29
 - ▶ 30-39
 - ▶ 40-49
 - ▶ 50-59
 - ▶ 60-69
 - ▶ 70 >
31. Your gender
- ♀ Female
 - ♂ Male

Thank you very much for cooperation!

Annex #2

Interview and Focus Group with target groups Guide

GUIDE FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW Employed persons with disabilities

Hello,

Firstly, thank you for showing interest in the research and finding time for an interview.

The present research is implemented in cooperation with the Civil Service Bureau and the UNDP and the UK Government support. Its main goal is to analyze the factors that impact the employment of the persons with disabilities in the public sectors, during recruitment, as well as in the process of work.

We would like to ask you to provide sincere answers to the questions provided below – your answers will be kept confidential, only the research team will have access to those. It will be impossible to identify answers by specific research participants from the research report. Data will be used solely for research purposes.

With the present research we would like to facilitate sustainable employment of the persons with disabilities in the public sector.

Thank you very much for cooperation!

Q Job search process

1. Please share with us your job search experience – what was the biggest impediment (the fear of cancellation of social assistance to the family, very low salary offered, needed help during job search, etc.) and support during this process?
2. Based on your experience, in your opinion, did you have equal opportunities during job search compared to others?
3. How would you recall the process of interview when you were hired for the mentioned job?
 - ▶ where and how it was conducted – whether the space was accessible to you?
 - ▶ in your opinion, how much did your PWD status have an impact on the interview process?
 - ▶ how appropriately did the organization's staff conducted the interview – used correct terms, asked questions about adaptation of environment, etc. How much were you able to demonstrate your capabilities during the interview?
 - ▶ overall, how satisfied were you with this interview?

4. If you have relevant experience during your job search – how much did the recruitment process differ at private and public organizations - *for instance, organizing an interview, the interview process, follow-up, etc.*

📍 Situation at a workplace

5. What do you think about your current occupation? In your opinion, how well do you discharge your job duties? What factors would you distinguish as those having impact on the effectiveness of your performance?
6. In your opinion, how much does disability influence your salary and professional development?
7. In your opinion, how much does disability affect the attitude of leadership and co-workers towards you? How is it manifested?
8. In general, in your opinion, how much are stereotypical attitudes present at your office? How is it manifested and towards whom?
9. If you were in the decision making capacity, what would you change at your workplace in order to enable any PWD to work effectively?
10. In your opinion, how should an employer collect information about employed PWDs – which methods would be acceptable to you:
 - ▶ Every employee should fill out a questionnaire when signing a contract, where they would indicate whether the person has a disability or special need.
 - ▶ Only those with a PWD status should fill it out.
 - ▶ At which periodicity this information should be updated? Who should have access to this information?
11. How clear were the questions related to functional limitation (questions (5-12) in the quantitative questionnaire?

Thank you very much for cooperation!

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

PWDs with past working experience

(Interview is about a respondent's experience in the public sector)

Hello,

Firstly, thank you for showing interest in the research and finding time for an interview.

The present research is implemented in cooperation with the Civil Service Bureau and the UNDP and the UK Government support. Its main goal is to analyze the factors that impact the employment of the persons with disabilities in the public sector, during recruitment, as well as in the process of work.

We would like to ask you to provide sincere answers to the questions provided below – your answers will be kept confidential, only the research team will have access to those. It will be impossible to identify answers by specific research participants from the research report. Data will be used solely for research purposes.

With the present research we would like to facilitate sustainable employment of the persons with disabilities in the public sector.

Thank you very much for cooperation!

Q The job search process

1. Please share with us your job search experience – what was the biggest impediment (the fear of cancellation of social assistance to the family, very low salary offered, needed help during job search, etc.) and support during this process?
2. If you have relevant experience --how much did the recruitment process differ at private and public organizations during your job search - for instance, organizing an interview, the interview process, follow-up, etc.
3. Based on your experience, in your opinion, did you enjoy equal opportunities during job search compared to others?

📍 Situation at workplace

1. Why are you no longer working at that office? what factors impacted your decision?
2. In your view, how well did you discharge your job duties? which factors would you highlight as those having impact on the effectiveness of your performance?
3. In your opinion, how much did your disability affect your salary and professional development?

4. In your opinion, how much did your disability affected attitude of the leadership and co-workers towards you? how was it manifested?
5. In general, in your view, how much were stereotypical attitudes present at your workplace? How was it manifested and towards whom?
6. If you were a decision-maker, what would you change at your workplace to enable any PWD to work effectively?
7. In your opinion, how should an employer collect information about employed PWDs – which methods would be acceptable to you:
 - ▶ Every employee should fill out a questionnaire when signing a contract, where they would indicate whether the person has a disability or special need.
 - ▶ Only those with a PWD status should fill it out.
 - ▶ At which periodicity this information should be updated? Who should have access to this information?
8. How clear were the questions related to functional limitation (questions (5-12) in the quantitative questionnaire?

Thank you very much for cooperation!

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

HR

Hello,

Firstly, thank you for showing interest in the research and finding time for an interview.

The present research is implemented in cooperation with the Civil Service Bureau and the UNDP and UK Government support. Its main goal is to analyze the factors that impact the employment of the persons with disabilities in the public sectors, during recruitment, as well as in the process of work.

We would like to ask you to provide sincere answers to the questions provided below – your answers will be kept confidential, only the research team will have access to those. It will be impossible to identify answers by specific research participants from the research report. Data will be used solely for research purposes.

With the present research we would like to facilitate sustainable employment of the persons with disabilities in the public sector.

Thank you very much for cooperation!

The recruitment process

1. Please tell us about the process of recruitment for a vacancy at your office.
2. How much does the recruitment process envisage the participation of PWDs?
3. In your view, do PWDs enjoy equal opportunities with others in the process of recruitment? Why do you think so?
4. How is an interview with a PWD planned – how much does this process differ from a regular interview?
5. In your opinion, does interview with a PWD job seeker raise certain challenges for your employees? have you conducted specific trainings in this area? Do you envisage their need and in which direction?
6. How is a decision made about hiring a PWD? Should such decision be agreed with leadership who usually are not involved in this process (especially in case a working environment will have to be adapted)?
7. How much does a job seeker's PWD status affect a decision taken during the recruitment process (positively, negatively)?

Situation at workplace

1. After hiring, how much does the HR Department focus on the creation of convenient workplace for a PWD employee? In general, what is the office policy with respect to any employee in this respect?
2. In your opinion, in the process of adapting to working environment, what is the most affected by an employee's PWD status:
 - ▶ the quality of performance? why?
 - ▶ relationships with co-workers? Why?
 - ▶ professional growth and promotion? why?
 - ▶ other?
3. Can you recall specific cases from your experience when a PWD quit – what were main reasons? why the employee could not be retained?
4. What are the opportunities of professional capacity development and promotion for PWDs at your office? how much does their situation differ from that of other employees?
5. In your opinion, what your organization should do to attract PWDs to your office and create convenient environment for them? where do you envisage the role of the HRD? In your opinion, should legislative regulations be amended?

6. How is information about PWDs employed at your office collected currently – what type of information do you collect and how? Where do you use this information and who has access to it? What type of information would you like to have?

Thank you very much for cooperation!

GUIDE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH Immediate supervisors of persons with disabilities

Hello,

Firstly, thank you for showing interest in the research and finding time for an interview.

The present research is implemented in cooperation with the Civil Service Bureau and the UNDP and the UK Government support. Its main goal is to analyze the factors that impact the employment of the persons with disabilities in the public sectors, during recruitment, as well as in the process of work.

We would like to ask you to provide sincere answers to the questions provided below – your answers will be kept confidential, only the research team will have access to those. It will be impossible to identify answers by specific research participants from the research report. Data will be used solely for research purposes.

With the present research we would like to facilitate sustainable employment of the persons with disabilities in the public sector.

Thank you very much for cooperation!

1. How much have you been involved in the process of recruitment of PWDs – how did you find out that you were his/her immediate supervisor?
2. How much was there the need to adapt working environment – how did this process go?
3. How much is the current working environment adapted to the needs of a PWD (physical, sensory - access to information)?
4. How would you, being an immediate supervisor, assess his/her performance? How much does his/her disability have an impact on his/her performance? How much does he/she need your or others' help? How much his/her disability has impact on your assessment about his/her performance?
5. In your opinion, how does an employee's PWD status impact relationships with co-workers – what is your observation? In your opinion, in general how much necessary is to enhance awareness of employees about PWD matters? Do they have to be trained specifically, when a PWD employee is hired?

6. What opportunities of professional capacity development and promotions do PWDs working at your office have? How much does their situation differ from that of other employees?
7. In your opinion, what your organization should do to attract PWDs to your office and create convenient environment for them? Where do you envisage the role of the HRD? In your opinion, should legislative regulations be amended?

Thank you very much for cooperation!

