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Building a better
working world

If you don't embrace differences, how will you achieve long-term value?

An Asia-Pacific perspective
on disability inclusion

Proud Contributor

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The better the question. The better the answer.
The better the world works.

Creating long-term value with disability inclusion

Today, more than 1 billion people around the world live with a disability. While many global companies have made progress toward more diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces, there is still a lot of work to do to embed disabilities inclusion across organizations and access this largely untapped talent pool.

To create long-term value, every professional must feel they belong, that they can be themselves, and that they're valued. This factsheet is designed to create awareness among employees and leaders about disabilities and the inclusion of "people with disabilities"(PwD) in the workplace. It outlines the disabilities landscape in the Asia-Pacific region and highlights how organizations can benefit from the inclusion of PwD in their workplaces.

Improving disability inclusion isn't only the right thing to do – it has strong business-building value. Today, efforts to promote disability inclusion are accelerating, as organizations see a clearer business case, especially in the following areas:

- ▸ **Productivity –** Disability inclusion initiatives can reduce hidden costs of low morale and high rates of absenteeism and staff turnover.[2]
- ▸ **Innovation –** A person with a disability offers alternative perspectives, approaches and strengths that can help a business solve problems.
- ▸ **Market development –** Employees with a disability are found to be well-situated to identify and understand market opportunities for universally accessible products.
- ▸ **Brand differentiation –** Inclusive employers have an opportunity to build a stronger brand that attracts and retains the best talent and increase a wider customer base. PwD make ~15% of the world's population.[3]

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At EY we appreciate the value that people with disabilities can bring to our organization. In turn we are creating long-term value for our people, clients and society through our focus on advancing DE&I.

Holly McGhee
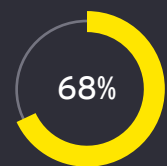EY Asia-Pacific, Diversity Equity & Inclusiveness Leader

Benefits of providing workplace accommodations to PwD[1]

Percentage of employers who reported experiencing benefits as a result of having made an accommodation
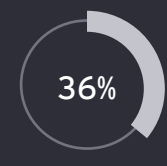
Direct benefits

90% — Retained a valued employee

68% — Increased employee productivity

57% — Increased employee attendance

36% — Increased company diversity
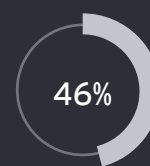
Indirect benefits

57% — Improved interactions with co-employees

55% — Increased overall company morale

46% — Increased safety

36% — Increased profitability

● HR-related benefits
● Productivity-related benefits

Source: 1. "Benefit and costs of accommodations", JAN, www.askjan.org/topics/costs.cfm, accessed 15 May 2022.
2. "Disability and employment factsheet", UN, www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities/disability-and-employment.html, accessed 10 July 2022.
3. "Disability and health", WHO, www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health, accessed 02 Aug 2022.

What is meant by "disability"?

Disability is the most widely accepted term for a condition that interferes with an individual's ability to perform key life activities.

The United Nations defines it as a "social" concept, the result of a mismatch between someone's abilities and the environment. This definition contrasts with the medical model of disability that defines it as a health condition.

As these abilities change throughout our lives, anyone can acquire a visible or nonvisible disability at any time.

According to a global research, 80% of disabilities are acquired between the ages of 18 and 64 – their prime working years.[1]

What are the most common types of disability?

Disabilities can be visible and non-visible. The most common are explained further below.

Mobility

Mobility includes people with varying types of physical disabilities. This includes upper or lower limb loss or disability, manual dexterity, and disability in co-ordination with different organs of the body. Mobility disability could be permanent, e.g., limb loss or damage, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, or temporary such as a broken bone.

Neurodivergent or cognitive learning

Neurodivergent refers to people with atypical cognitive processing, e.g., autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, stuttering and Tourette's syndrome.

Psychiatric or socio-emotional or mental health

Psychiatric disabilities cover a wide range of conditions, including anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychiatric conditions.

Chronic health conditions or illnesses
Chronic health conditions that last one year or more and require ongoing medical attention, e.g., Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, asthma, cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

Sensory

Involves any of the five senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. The two main types of sensory disability are related to hearing, vision, or both. Such disabilities affect access to visual or auditory information, e.g., partial or complete loss of sight or hearing.

Source: 1. "The truth about disability", Valuable500, https://www.thevaluable500.com/campaign/the-truth-about-disability , accessed 21 July 2022.

Across Asia-Pacific, people with disabilities experience varying levels of support

People with disabilities are

2 to 6 times

less likely to be employed than people without disabilities in Asia-Pacific[1]

Estimated social and economic loss of

3 to 7%

due to unemployment, underemployment and exclusion of PwD from the labor market in Asia-Pacific[1]

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jurisdictions in Asia-Pacific have quota systems obliging companies to adhere to targets for PwD representation in workforce (1%–5% of workforce)[1]

Government policies push for business to include PwD

While an estimated 472 million PwD are of working age (15–64) in Asia-Pacific, disability inclusion isn't always top of the C-suite or boardroom agenda.

In fact, in recent research by EY and Valuable, 56% of 130 C-suite executives indicated that the topic of disability rarely or never came up on the leadership agenda.[2]
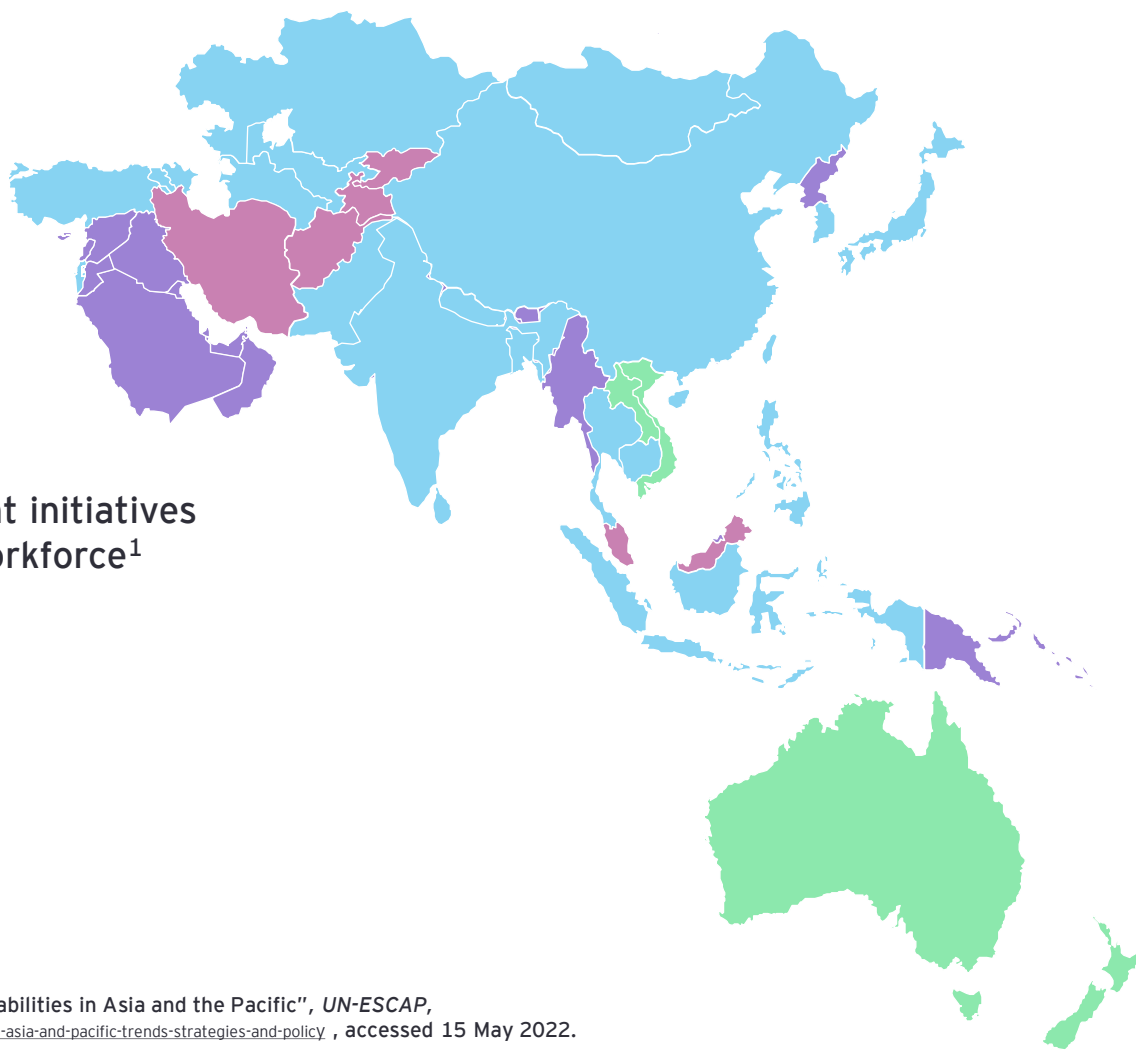To close the gap and promote employment of PwD, governments in the Asia-Pacific region have devised a number of strategies.

Quota schemes that oblige companies to employ PwD as a specified percentage of their workforce is popular.

Other strategies include anti-discrimination laws, awarding contracts to businesses or civil entities that hire PwD.

However, while these schemes mandate the inclusion of PwD into the workforce, they may not be enough to change the mindset of employers toward disability inclusion.

To make a difference, employers need to look past legal obligations, compliance activities and corporate social responsibility targets, and instead, invest and strengthen their commitments to become fully disability-inclusive businesses.

Most common government initiatives to increase PwD in the workforce[1]

- Quota schemes
- Anti-discrimination laws
- Both quota schemes and anti-discrimination laws
- Neither quota schemes nor anti-discrimination laws

Source: 1. "Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific", *UN-ESCAP,* www.unescap.org/kp/2020/employment-persons-disabilities-asia-and-pacific-trends-strategies-and-policy , accessed 15 May 2022.

2. "Six ways to advance disability inclusion in your organization", *EY,* https://www.ey.com/en_gl/diversity-inclusiveness/six-ways-to-advance-disability-inclusion-in-your-organization , accessed 15 May 2022.

Building disability capabilities starts with inclusiveness

Inclusive organizations maximize the power of differences and perspectives and realize the full potential of all their employees. This minimizes blind spots and encourages truly innovative thinking, which is critical to help organizations deliver long-term value in today's global marketplace.

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Inclusive leadership skills are developed through deliberate attention and practice. All EY people globally have access to learning programs including e-learning modules, EY badges and classroom trainings. Inclusiveness is tracked through our performance management process and outcomes measured using the Global DE&I Tracker.

Michael Wong
EY Asia-Pacific Area Managing Partner, Talent

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Hiring, training and developing talent, including persons with disability, is critical to inclusion. Citi's Disability: Enabling Diverse Abilities Affinity in Asia-Pacific Networks, initiated in India and Singapore, deepen engagement and drive awareness to support persons with disability. We are also improving our work environment by building better infrastructure and digital tools.

Tushar Vikram
Head of Commercial Banking for Citi India and Asia-Pacific Disability Affinity Co-Lead

Inclusiveness

Inclusion is about leveraging differences to achieve better business results. Create an environment where all people feel – and are – valued and able to bring their differences to work each day.

Individuals and organizations alike can optimize diversity by demonstrating and encouraging inclusive leadership behaviors:

1. Be aware of your own preferences and biases.
2. Be open to other perspectives for decision making.
3. Seek out perspectives different from your own.
4. Adapt your style to work with others effectively.
5. Enable everyone to contribute.
6. Make success possible for all.

Six ways to advance disability inclusion in your organization[1]

Develop the business case and secure sponsorship
Tie the business case for disability inclusion to overall business objectives.

Ensure your people are educated about disability inclusion practices
Enable everyone to have an understanding of disability inclusion, their responsibilities and available assistance.

Make accessible technology and physical space a key consideration
Build accessibility into the initial design process and involve employees with disabilities in the design and testing phase.

Consider how you communicate
Use accessibility technology to remove communication barriers experienced by people with disabilities that affect reading, hearing, speaking, writing or understanding.

Connect with your disabilities community
Don't make assumptions; ask PwD what works well for them and what can be done differently.

Create equitable experiences and opportunities for applicants with disabilities
Consider whether your organization is unintentionally creating barriers for some candidates.

Source: 1. "Six ways to advance disability inclusion in your organization", EY, https://www.ey.com/en_gl/diversity-inclusiveness/six-ways-to-advance-disability-inclusion-in-your-organization , accessed 15 May 2022.

Building an inclusive recruitment process

Recruiting is an integral part of an organization's inclusion agenda as it helps increase representation, economic empowerment and participation for PwD. However, most organizations lack clarity on where to start, what good practices look like, and how to develop a robust inclusive recruitment process.

Inclusive recruitment – a necessity for today's workplace

An inclusive recruitment process will focus on driving inclusiveness and accessibility end-to-end in a hiring process. Best practice would also go into job design and employee experience before the PwD talent joins the organization.

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To drive sustainable growth, businesses need to continually innovate and identify new sources of talent along with creating a culture where people feel free to be themselves. Neurodiversity hiring is expanding globally at EY. In Asia-Pacific, we are proud to have launched hiring programs designed for neurodivergent talent in EY Oceania and EY Japan. The world works better when we include everyone.
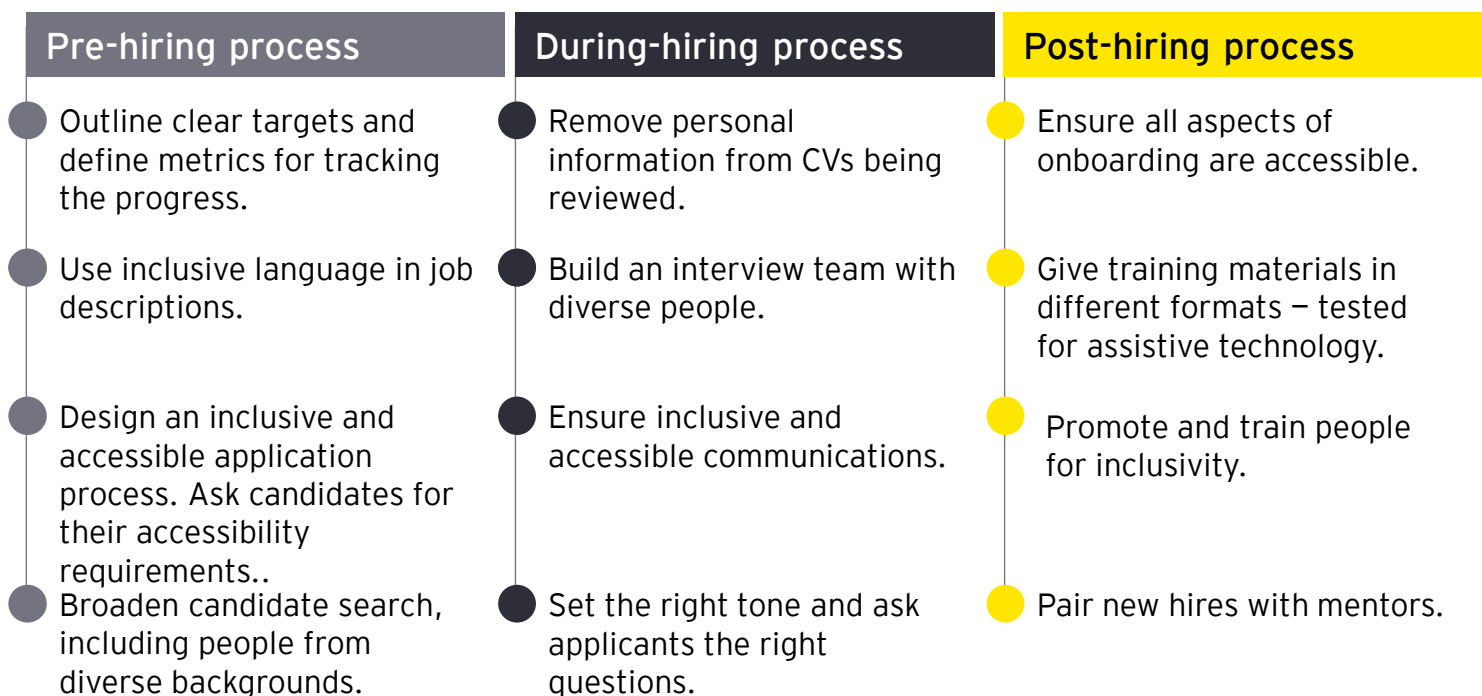
Soumee De
EY, Partner, People Advisory Services Singapore, Ernst & Young Advisory Pte Ltd

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Creating an inclusive environment is about making sure that our workforce can bring their authentic selves to work. Citi's Self-Identification initiative helps us understand our workforce demographics and measure our progress toward representation. This also helps inform new strategies and programs that support diverse talent. The more we know, the more we can work on what matters. Inclusive leadership is also key to fostering an environment of mutual understanding and respect where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. As a firm that prioritizes diversity, equity and inclusion, we are committed to advancing social and economic inclusions of persons with disability globally.

Karan Sharma
Asia-Pacific Lead for Talent Management and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Citi

Inclusive recruitment process

Pre-hiring process	During-hiring process	Post-hiring process
Outline clear targets and define metrics for tracking the progress.	Remove personal information from CVs being reviewed.	Ensure all aspects of onboarding are accessible.
Use inclusive language in job descriptions.	Build an interview team with diverse people.	Give training materials in different formats – tested for assistive technology.
Design an inclusive and accessible application process. Ask candidates for their accessibility requirements..	Ensure inclusive and accessible communications.	Promote and train people for inclusivity.
Broaden candidate search, including people from diverse backgrounds.	Set the right tone and ask applicants the right questions.	Pair new hires with mentors.

Creating accessible workspaces

Organizations need to offer a workplace that is accessible and fair for all – in the office and online. To build an inclusive environment, invite and empower PwD to participate and offer feedback throughout the design process.

Physical accessibility

Accessibility is the practice of making information, activities, and/or environments sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible.

When designing an accessible workplace, organizations should take into consideration the overall accessibility of the workplace, such as:

▸ Vertical and horizontal access to workspaces and equipment

▸ Formalizing a process for additional adjustments to be requested and assigning an individual to oversee the changes needed

▸ Working with landlords and facilities designers to include accessibility in the design plans from the beginning of a project

Digital accessibility

Digital accessibility means that digital content, sites, tools, and physical spaces are designed to be used fully by all people. Each of us creates digital content every day, from emails to presentations, and we should ensure that what we create is equally accessible to all.

To make your content more accessible for everyone, follow these quick tips

Presentations and documents:

▸ Use high contrast between text and background.

▸ Use large fonts, short lines, and lots of white space.

▸ Avoid putting too many words on the page.

▸ Work to ensure every slide has a descriptive title and page numbers.

▸ Use built-in styles, headings, and a table of contents in your documents.

Business communication platforms:

▸ On teams use the captioning function by selecting "..." and "Turn on live captions" .

▸ Avoid using acronyms and idioms.

▸ If possible, keep PowerPoint and Word files in their native format.

Assistive technology

Assistive technologies (AT) refer to any physical or digital equipment that makes it easier for an individual with or without disabilities to complete everyday work tasks. For example, screen reader software helps people with a sight impairment to more easily consume digital content.

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Engaging diverse perspectives is essential to every organization – it sustains growth and cultivates a next generation of leaders who can further drive diversity, equity and inclusion. Citi has in place various partnerships that aim to change perceptions of disability, provide a platform for individuals to share and inspire others, as well as support social enterprises that empower persons with disabilities.

Kaleem Rizvi
Asia-Pacific Head of Corporate Bank at Citi and Asia-Pacific Disability Affinity Co-Lead

AT has the potential to dramatically improve the everyday lives of PwD. For instance, at EY, a senior manager, using an adaptive stylus, regains the ability to write on a tablet following a paralyzing spinal cord injury.

Improving disability inclusion isn't only the right thing to do — it has strong business-building value. Today, efforts to promote disability inclusion are accelerating, as organizations see a clearer business case. By creating equitable opportunities for people with disabilities, creating an accessible recruitment and inclusive work experience and proactively closing gaps often stemming from societal biases, organizations can create long-term value.

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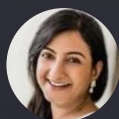
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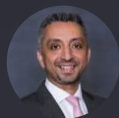
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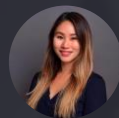
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