

## BIG ISSUES IN OUR LIVES

# What Needs to Change

## What Employment Looks Like for People with Intellectual Disabilities

### Our Experience with Employment

Very few people with intellectual disabilities have jobs - less than 1 in 10 in many countries. Most people with intellectual disabilities want to work, but we face many barriers when looking for jobs. We also face barriers at work if we do get jobs. This makes it hard to support ourselves, be included in the community, and feel valued.

*Self-advocates know what we want - real jobs, for real pay, in inclusive workplaces.*



*"Having a regular job with fair pay is very important. It helps us use our skills, make friends, have a better life, and be seen as valuable members of our community."*

SELF-ADVOCATE, COLOMBIA



## Article 27 of the CRPD protects our right to employment.

### Our Rights

- It says our governments should be making sure employers stop treating us unfairly.
- It says we need to get support to work in inclusive places.

### Big Problems We Face

#### At School and With Training

- Many people don't get good inclusive education
- We are excluded from training that would help us get jobs

#### With Support and Benefits

- There is not a lot of support to help people find jobs
- People might lose their disability benefits if they get a job - and benefits can be hard to get back if the job doesn't work out
- We are not paid fairly when we do get a job

#### With Employers

- Employers don't understand what we can do
- Employers think we can only do simple jobs
- We do not get support or adjustments to help us do jobs
- Co-workers leave us out



*"For us, work is important because everyone needs financial support. In my experience, to find and apply for a job is very challenging."*

SELF-ADVOCATE, MALAWI



*"I was in a job where they didn't include me in meetings. That is not inclusion. That is just having a person with an intellectual disability in a list of employees."*

SELF-ADVOCATE FROM ARGENTINA





## Good Inclusive Employment Looks Like...

- We are part of the everyday workforce alongside everyone else
- We get clear information about jobs
- Employers understand our needs
- Co-workers are respectful and supportive
- The work matches our skills
- We get fair pay and can support ourselves
- We feel like part of the team
- We have the chance to move up in the workplace

*"In 2014, I found a good job because my boss understood what I could do and what support I needed."*

SELF-ADVOCATE FROM EGYPT



## What Needs To Change

### What Employers Can Do

- Make Workplaces Inclusive
  - Give us jobs in regular workplaces
  - Pay fair wages
  - Help people feel part of the team
  - Give people jobs that match their skills
- Provide Good Support
  - Help people learn their jobs
  - Ask people about the support they need at work
  - Be flexible

### What Others Can Do

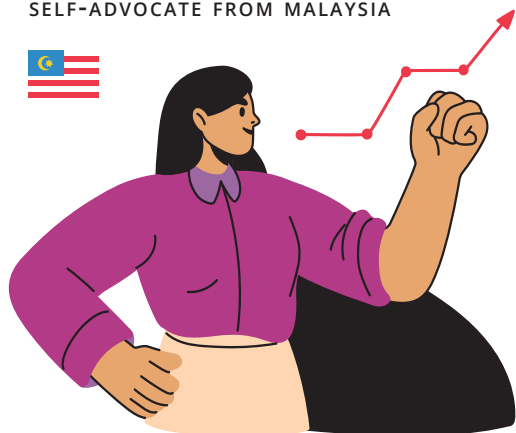
- Help Change Minds
  - Share success stories
  - Talk about inclusion and challenge stereotypes
- Support Us
  - Help people build careers
  - Support people to develop their skills and believe in themselves

### What Governments Can Do

- Make Better Laws
  - Create laws that make sure we can get jobs
  - Make sure benefits don't stop when people work
  - Support companies that hire people with intellectual disabilities
- Improve Inclusive Education
  - Make schools more inclusive
  - Create more job training programs that include us
  - Help people learn skills

*"We need more inclusive employment opportunities that respect our abilities and ambitions."*

SELF-ADVOCATE FROM MALAYSIA



#### Resources from our network

- [Inclusion International's Position Paper on Inclusive Employment](#)
- [Article on Barriers to Employment for people with intellectual disabilities in low- and middle-income Countries: Self-advocate and Family Perspectives](#)
- [Toolkit for Employers on How to Create Inclusive Workplaces](#)

*This document was made by self-advocates from the Inclusion International network. It was prepared for the Global Disability Summit in 2025. The German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) funded this work through UNICEF. The content represents the views of people with intellectual disabilities around the world — it does not necessarily represent what GIZ or UNICEF think.*

#### OUR BIG MESSAGE ABOUT EMPLOYMENT

**People with intellectual disabilities around the world want inclusive and empowering job opportunities that match our skills and interests.**

**Jobs should allow us to contribute, earn fair pay, and have our own money.**

