

Project for Promoting Employment
Support of Persons with Disabilities
in Sri Lanka

Project Completion Report

November 2025

Japan International Cooperation Agency
(JICA)

HM
JR
26-051

Abbreviations

CBR	Community-based Rehabilitation
CCC	Ceylon Chamber of Commerce
DOE	Department of Manpower and Employment
DS	Divisional Secretariat
DSS	Department of Social Services
ESPD	Project for Promoting Employment Support of Persons with Disabilities in Sri Lanka
ESU	Employment Support Unit
ETF/EPF	Employees' Trust Fund/ Employers Provident Fund
HRDO	Human Resource Development Officer
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JPM	Joint Progress Meeting
MOU	Minute of Understandings
LCP	Linkage Creation Program
PC	Provincial Council
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SHG	Self-help Group of PWDs
SSO	Social Service Officer

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1. Outline of the Project

(1) Background of the Project

In November 2021, JICA and Department of Social Services (DSS) have jointly commenced a technical cooperation project titled Project for Promoting Employment Support of Persons with Disabilities (ESPD). The purpose of this 4-year project is to establish a sustainable and practical employment support system for job seekers with disabilities in Sri Lanka. By closely working with important stakeholders like Department of Manpower and Employment (DOME), National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and Employers' Federation of Ceylon, the ESPD team implemented a variety of programs including the baseline survey, activities for designing Linkage Creation Program (LCP) which is an official framework for encouraging Social Service Officers (SSO) under DSS and Human Resource Development Officers (HRDO) under DOME to work together.

While implementing LCP nationwide, ESPD commenced community meetings of persons with disabilities (SIHINA) inspired by the Japanese initiatives, continuing activities to promote employment and social participation for persons with disabilities. In October 2024, the Concept Note (Annex 1.) on the establishment of the Employment Support Unit (ESU) managing LCP/SIHINA was approved by Secretary General in charge of DSS. Consequently, LCP and SIHINA were formally approved as a government program.

By the project's completion in November 2025, it was confirmed that 488 companies/institutions had employed persons with disabilities through LCP, with 719 individuals in employment.

(2) Duration of the Project

23rd November 2025 – 22nd November 2025

(3) Project Implementation Structure

Project Director: Director of DSS

Project Manager: Additional Director of DSS

The list of the Japanese experts is as follows:

Name	Title	Period
KATO Naoko	Chief Advisor	2021/11/23- 2022/6/30
SHIMIZU Takashi	Employment of Persons with Disabilities Chief Advisor/Employment of Persons with Disabilities	2021/11/23 – 2023/11/22 2023/11/23 – 2025/11/22
OTAWARA Ayaka	Project Coordination/Networking	2023/1/16 – 2025/1/15
ITO Miho	Project Coordination/Networking	2025/1/9 – 2025/11/22

(4) Project Design Matrix

Overall Goal		Objectively Verifiable Indicators
Inclusive employment services is promoted by the government of Sri Lanka.		1. Compared to 2024, the number of job seekers with disabilities who get a job by utilizing the Project outputs increases in 5% in 2027. 2. Compared to 2024, the number of companies which employ job seekers with disabilities increases in 5%
Project Purpose		Objectively Verifiable Indicators
Inclusive employment service delivery system on employment support for job seekers with disabilities and private sector is established		1. The number of job seekers with disabilities to get a job by utilizing the project outputs exceed 500 2. The number of companies to employ job seekers with disabilities exceed 250
Outputs		Objectively Verifiable Indicators
1.	A plan for promoting employment of job seekers with disabilities (the ESPD Plan) is developed.	1. DSS authorizes the results of the survey. 2. The revised ESPD Plan is authorized at each JCC meeting 3. The ESPD completion report is finalized and authorized by relevant agencies at JCC meetings.
2	A linkage initiated by public sector is strengthened island-wide.	1. A linkage creation program is developed 2. 490 cases for persons with disabilities to be employed (the data will be disaggregated by disability, gender, district, sector, retention and promotion rate to improve employment support service) 3. 35% of employed persons with disabilities is women
3.	Inclusive employment services initiated by private sector are implemented.	1. More than 10 cases which the trained human resources support job seekers with disabilities to get a job 2. 4 cases of accessibility improved (physical and information) 3. 20 times which the Sri Lanka media highlight the project activities and outputs

The figures of Overall Goal, Project Purpose, Output 2., and Output 3.3. were set at 4th JCC meeting held in November 2023 and the ones of Output 3.1. & 2. were at 6th JCC meetings in October 2024.

(5) Trainings in Japan

ESPD conducted the training program in Japan in 2023 and 2024 in order to establish practical and efficient cooperation framework between DSS and DOME, and let the project stakeholders to have common understanding on the ESPD programs by experiencing actual workplaces of persons with disabilities in Japan and learning its expertise and history.

In total 18 counterpart personnels participated in the program and the lists are as follows:

Participant list for 1st training program from 7th June 2022 to 17th June 2022

Name	Organization	Title
Ms. PIYASENA Hemajulige Thanuja Ruwanthi Nalika	Ministry in charge of DSS	Additional Secretary
Mr. RATNAYAKE Mudiyansele Pemasiri	Ministry in charge of DSS	Additional Secretary
MS. HERATH Anoja	DSS	Director
MS. BENTOTA Shiromali	DOME	Additional Director
Mr. PERERA Sumith	DOME	Additional Director
Ms. WICKRAMARACHCHI Jayamali	NSPD	Director
Ms. Dulmini Lakshadi	DSS	SSO
Ms. Darshani Karunarathna	DSS	Director
Mr. Wijesundara Buddika	DSS	SSO

Participant list for 2nd training program from 4th June 2023 to 15th June 2023

Name	Organization	Title
Ms.PERERA Hetti Arachchige Hemalatha	Ministry in charge of DSS	Additional Secretary
Ms.PARANAVITHANA Shanika Hasangi	Ministry in charge of DSS	Additional Director
Ms.ATHUKORALA Jayani Laknilu	DSS	Accountant
Ms.RATNAYAKA Ratnayaka Mudiyansele Rasika Damayanthi	DSS	Assistant Director
Mr.PAKKIYARAJAH Kirushnakumar	DSS	SSO
Mr.LOKU DADALLAGE Thushara	DSS	SSO
Ms.BEHETGE KAPURALALAGE GEDARA Rasika Subasinghe	DSS	SSO
Mr.KIRIELLA Kiriella Gurunnanselage Hirana Helaruwan	DOME	Director General
Ms.PANAMBALANA ARACHCHIGE Ishara Madushani	DOME	HRDO

2. The Programs introduced by ESPD

(1) LCP

The ESPD team found that there was no public service for job seekers with disabilities and companies interested in accepting such workers through the baseline survey conducted in 2022. At the point, SSOs only was in charge of disbursing poverty allowance to the local household with persons with disabilities and had no connection with the local private sector. Therefore, ESPD established the relationship with DOME to provide efficient employment service by collaborating their HRDOs who have the relationship with the private sector. The SSO-HRDO cooperation is the foundation of LCP.

Since August 2022, the ESPD team started conducting a series of workshops for establishing SSO-HRDO cooperation frameworks island-wide and more than 900 officers participated in total. The participants set their joint action plan for visiting companies and having meetings with local job seekers with disabilities. In 2023, stakeholder meetings expanding SSO/HRDOs' networks with wider ranges of job seekers and companies were held by the ESPD as well.

	
Workshop for establishing the SSO-HRDO cooperation framework	Joint company visit by SSO and HRDO
	
Stakeholder meeting inviting local company managers and job seekers with disabilities	Awarding events inviting SSOs/HRDOs, companies, workers and families of success cases

The LCP structure had been updated through the project period and the details are well explained in ESPD 13 movie¹.

(2) SIHINA

The awareness-raising activities involving persons with disabilities initially assumed collaboration with local disabled persons' organizations, but this has not effectively worked out for various reasons. The director of DSS, who participated in the 2023 training in Japan, was impressed by 'Dream', an after-work gathering of workers with disabilities in Kobe. Upon returning to Sri Lanka, she proposed a regional gathering modelled on Dream, named "SIHINA" (meaning 'dream' in Sinhala). The first meeting was held in Moratuwa District, Colombo Province, in September 2023.

Until the latter half of 2024, the implementation remained sporadic, occurring monthly in the capital region and surrounding districts at best. However, following the approval of the concept note in October 2024 and a workshop for all district officers in December 2024, support for SIHINA meetings across all districts was initiated. Efforts of active districts such as Matara and Jaffna spread to neighboring districts. Consequently, the number of meetings increased dramatically as the second half of 2025 commenced.

Furthermore, the content of the meetings gradually changed. Initially, the meetings mainly featured lectures by officers and the provision of activities. However, as the SIHINA experience accumulated, interactive and participatory activities increased. There was a rise in SIHINA groups where participants themselves design agendas such as peer support sessions, experience sharing and career guidance from workers with disabilities to those seeking employment, recreational activities including music, art and group trips.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r0A1BFB6BY>

SIHINA activities



Traditional Ceremony



Trip



Career Guidance
Interview with company



Art



Recreation



Experience-sharing



Music

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When considering employment support for persons with disabilities, the availability of initiatives such as workshops in Japan or Malaysia's Community-Based Rehabilitation centers which enable persons with disabilities who have completed their schooling to go out of home continuously and connect with society is crucial. The baseline survey revealed that the quality and quantity of such support in Sri Lanka is extremely limited. Throughout the project period, the ESPD team have keenly felt the high barriers not only to employment but also to social participation for persons with disabilities. It is earnestly hoped that SIHINA will become a foundational initiative to help overcome these barriers going forward.

3. The Project Achievements

(1) Project Purpose

“Inclusive employment service delivery system on employment support for job seekers with disabilities and private sector is established”

Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Target	Achievement
1. The number of job seekers with disabilities to get a job by utilizing the project outputs exceed 500	500	719
2. The number of companies to employ job seekers with disabilities exceed 250	200	488

Through LCP under the DSS-DOME cooperation, 719 individuals with disabilities have got the employment opportunities across 488 companies/institutions by the end of August 2025, with this achievement continuing to grow steadily even after the project completion.

At the policy level, the concept note for LCP implementation was approved by the relevant Secretary, and ESU who is responsible for LCP and SIHINA operations has been established.

At the field level, SSOs and HRDOs have successfully collaborated to create employment cases in 219 divisions (64.6% of the 339 divisions nationwide). This demonstrates that the objective of ‘establishing a service delivery system’ has been achieved.

(2) Output 1

“A plan for promoting employment of job seekers with disabilities (the ESPD Plan) is developed”

Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Achievement
1. DSS authorizes the results of the survey.	The results of the baseline survey conducted from 2021 to 2022 were approved by DSS at the first JCC meeting in July 2022.
2. The revised ESPD Plan is authorized at each JCC meeting	At each JCC meeting, the implementation status, outcomes, and challenges of LCP were shared with the DSS and relevant organizations, and agreement on the Project Monitoring Sheet, the ESPD Plan or the concept note was reached without delay.

3. The ESPD completion report is finalized and authorized by relevant agencies at JCC meetings.	In October 2024, the concept note on LCP and SIHINA and the establishment of ESU to oversee these operations was approved by the Secretary in charge of DSS. Including the progress, the ESPD completion report will be ready by 20 th November, 2025.
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The achievement of the Output1 is considered complete with the approval of the concept note, alongside the project purpose. To avoid the situation common in many developing countries where “paper (laws, strategies, action plans, etc.) exists but practical implementation does not occur”, a concrete program implementation framework has been established. This includes a service delivery structure managed by divisional SSOs and HRDOs at the field level, the holding of Joint Progress Meetings (JPM) at district level, and the establishment of ESU at the central level where DSS and DOME jointly conduct monitoring and management of LCP and SIHINA.

In countries with fragile political systems and socio-economic conditions, sudden policy shifts or ad hoc administrative restructuring can occur, and this possibility cannot be underestimated in Sri Lanka. Even should changes happen within the responsible ministry or specific regions, potentially rendering the current LCP implementation structure dysfunctional, the mechanisms have been implemented to ensure that project outcomes and lessons learned remain accessible at central, district and divisional levels. This includes the other ministry, persons with disabilities who have got employment nationwide, the companies that have accepted them, and SSOs and HRDOs who have supported these connections.

(3) Output 2

“A linkage initiated by public sector is strengthened island-wide”

Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Achievement
1. A linkage creation program is developed	LCP, formulated through the pilot activities following the first JCC meeting, was approved at the second JCC in November 2022.
2. 490 cases for persons with disabilities to be employed (the data will be disaggregated by disability, gender, district, sector, retention and promotion rate to improve employment support service)	At the project's completion, 719 success cases were confirmed through LCP. The disaggregated data is shown in 4. of this report.

3. 35% of employed persons with disabilities is women	At the project completion, females with disabilities accounted for 36% of the total success cases.
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As all set indicators have been achieved, this outcome can be considered accomplished.

At the end of 2023, the proportion of females in the total success cases stood at 33%, falling short of the target. Consequently, initiatives from 2024 onwards prioritized follow-up with female job seekers and encouraging companies proactive in hiring women. Another measure was also implemented to feature more female success stories in video production. Although the increase was modest, achieving the target demonstrates that SSO-HRDOs nationwide were able to improve the service quality.

(4) Output 3

“Inclusive employment services initiated by private sector are implemented”

Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Achievement
1. More than 10 cases which the trained human resources support job seekers with disabilities to get a job	At the project completion, Job Coach trainees had made 2 success cases.
2. 4 cases of accessibility improved (physical and information)	ESPD videos with sign languages, subtitles, and narration, Brochures with Braille, and portable ramps for steps. Improvements to workplace accessibility (including adapting the working environment at Triple Inc. for beneficiary with physical impairment and ensuring hearing-impaired workers are not left behind during emergencies) Advice on renovating government buildings following JICA survey team recommendations (in cooperation with Urban Development Authority (UDA))
3. 20 times which the Sri Lanka media highlight the project activities and outputs	In total, ESPD highlighted in media 25 time during the project period

Regarding the output, there are some aspects that are difficult to evaluate. For instance, the job coach program did not achieve the anticipated results, and in the case of accessibility, the focus shifted from highlighting individual case improvement examples during the project's

progression to emphasizing the dissemination of principles for undertaking improvements (providing reasonable accommodation based on dialogue).

The stagnation of the job coach program relative to initial expectations underscored the importance of selecting approaches appropriate to the socio-economic context and circumstances of each country for enhancing future cooperation. Job coach might efficiently work in the economy driven in a healthy business environment. The Sri Lankan economy has a structural problem for a long time and it was a cause of the financial crisis in 2022. Employment of persons with disabilities cannot be separated from such general factors in economic development.

Regarding accessibility improvements, while working in line with the above policy, it became apparent that knowledge of universal design is not well recognized by local professionals such as architects, and there were no unified standards or guidelines. Furthermore, the accessibility guidelines commissioned by DSS from a consultant around 2006 were not disseminated to other ministries and agencies, including UDA, and even within DSS, few staff were aware of their existence.

Although the initiative to renovate Sethsiripaya Stage II building in cooperation with UDA did not happen due to the DSS circumstances, UDA has indicated its intention to continue discussions with JICA regarding matters such as the installation of tactile paving.

4. Possibility of achieving Overall Goal

This chapter summarizes the prospects for achieving the two indicators of ESPD's Overall Goal *"Inclusive employment services is promoted by the government of Sri Lanka"* along with the rationale for these prospects, as follows.

(1) Indicator 1.

"Compared to 2024, the number of job seekers with disabilities who get a job by utilizing the Project outputs increases in 5% in 2027"

Year	No. of success cases
2022	18
2023	128
2024	262
2025 (Jan - Aug)	311
2027	275

The benchmark for the indicator is 262 cases in 2024, meaning 275 cases must be achieved in 2027. As shown in the table above, 311 cases were achieved between January and August 2025. Given the nationwide penetration of employment support through LCP, the administrative capacity to achieve this indicator is established if only any major policy changes by the Sri Lankan government or large-scale socio-economic crises did not happen after the completion of ESPD.

(2) Indicator 2.

"Compared to 2024, the number of companies which employ job seekers with disabilities increases in 5%"

Year	No. of new ESPD member companies	No. of the ESPD member companies which make new success case(s) in the year besides the past ones	Total No. of the ESPD member companies which make success case(s) in the year
2022	16	-	16
2023	107	0	107
2024	155	8	163
2025 (Jan - Aug)	210	19	229
2027	XX	XX	171

In 2024, 155 companies newly employed persons with disabilities through LCP, while 8 companies continued to employ those job seekers using LCP from the previous years, bringing the total to 163 companies for the 2024 performance. Calculating 105% of this benchmark indicates that employment cases must be created at 171 or more companies in 2027.

Regarding the number of companies utilizing LCP, the eight-month figure for 2025 stands at 229 companies, significantly exceeding the target. Therefore, it is a fully achievable figure if DSS and DOME continue to improve the relationships with the existing ESPD member companies while simultaneously developing the networks with new ones.

5. Analysis on the Project Achievements

This chapter aims to clarify the actual situation of LCP/SIHINA by analyzing the details of project achievements and contribute to future improvements and consideration of future cooperation in the country or in the relevant fields.

(1) Age range of the LCP beneficiaries

Age Group	No. of ESPD beneficiaries	Percentage (719 samples)
10s	47	6%
20s	325	45%
30s	149	21%
40s	83	12%
Older than 50	44	6%
Unknown	71	10%

LCP is utilized across a broad age range, with the youngest beneficiary being 16 and the oldest 70. However, data indicates that 72% of beneficiaries are under 40, suggesting the program serves as a pathway for young jobseekers with disabilities to enter the labour market.

(2) Impairment types of the LCP beneficiaries

Impairment Type	No. of ESPD beneficiaries	Percentage (719 samples)
Physical	211	29%
Intellectual	98	14%
Hearing	287	40%
Visual	15	2%
Mental	60	8%
Epilepsy	15	2%
Mutual	33	5%

The data is highly significant with the tangible evidence and demonstrates that the views such as “people with intellectual or mental disabilities cannot work” or “visually impaired people can only work as telephone operators” held by many Sri Lankan stakeholders in the beginning period of the projects were prejudiced.

(3) The LCP beneficiary gender data

	Male	Female
No. of ESPD beneficiaries who got a job through LCP	457	262
Percentage	64%	36%
6-month retention rate	65% (208 samples)	52% (125 samples)

Sri Lanka has a low female labour market participation rate, with only around 30% of beneficiaries being women during the project's first year. Recognizing this situation, efforts were made to emphasize the importance of supporting female job seekers in various activities. This included highlighting women's success stories in the ESPD movies. As a result, the project ultimately achieved a 36% female beneficiary rate.

While achieving a certain level of female beneficiary representation is an achievement of ESPD, the activities have also revealed the challenging positions many female job seekers and workers face. Follow-up surveys identified issues specific to women, such as the case where, despite enjoying her work and receiving workplace support for her performance to enable long-term employment, she was compelled to resign due to her father's wishes, or the cases where marriage necessitated resignation. These circumstances likely contribute significantly to the low workplace retention rates shown in the table (3) above. Furthermore, the follow-up surveys of those who left revealed that female leavers cited 'health and physical condition' as a reason for leaving at a significantly higher rate than their male counterparts (men: 6%, women: 15%). It appears that a lack of consideration for women's physical and mental wellbeing, not limited to women with disabilities, is hindering women's employment and social participation.

(4) The LCP beneficiaries by the first language

	Sinhala	Tamil
No. of success cases	548	177
The rate of the success cases against population (,000,000)	28.8	60.2
The female beneficiary rate	40%	25%
6-month retention rate	57%	76%
Average salary (LKR)	25,640	22,180

In Sri Lanka, there are approximately 75% of the population whose primary language is Sinhala and approximately 25% whose primary language is Tamil.

Analysis about the successful cases by dividing them into these two groups reveals that while the rate of the success cases against population in the Tamil-speaking region is approximately double that in the Sinhala-speaking region, the rate of female beneficiaries is nearly half, lower than in the Sinhala-speaking region. The higher workplace retention rate in the Tamil-speaking region could be related to the fact that there are fewer cases of women facing workplace disadvantages, as mentioned (3).

Furthermore, the Tamil-speaking region has suffered socio-economic exhaustion due to a long-running civil war, and infrastructure development and private sector development have been left behind from other regions. This factor is likely a reason why wage disparities between the group in terms of the employment of persons with disabilities.

(5) The LCP beneficiaries by occupation

Industry Type	Percentage (719 samples)
Agriculture	3%
Manufacturing (Food)	7%
Manufacturing (Garment)	29%
Manufacturing (Other)	16%
Service (Hospitality)	7%
Service (Transportation e.g. garage)	12%
Service (Education/Social)	4%
Service (Health)	1%
Service (Others)	14%

The garment industry, a main pillar of Sri Lanka's economy, provides the most employment opportunities through LCP as well as many success cases have been created in the service sector. In countries where domestic industries lack diversification or rely heavily on foreign labour, limited employment opportunities would make it difficult to promote employment support for persons with disabilities. Even there are challenges like low wages, Sri Lanka's industrial structure characterized by thriving labour-intensive sectors such as garment manufacturing and the hospitality sector including tourism appears to have positively influenced the growth of ESPD success cases.

Going forward, increasing success stories in high-value-added industries would enhance the prospects of LCP being utilized by more jobseekers and companies. However, the immaturity of such industries appears to be an urgent challenge not only for employment promotion of persons with disabilities but also for the Sri Lankan economy.

(6) The rate of success cases with EPF/ETF

	Percentage (693 samples)
Employment with EPF/ETF	31%
Employment without EPF/ETF	69%

In Sri Lanka, two types of social security schemes are common: Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and the Employees' Trust Fund (ETF). These are operated on a system where contributions are deducted from wages, split between the employer and employee.

According to the World Bank², approximately 30% of Sri Lanka's workforce is entitled in the formal sector with EPF/ETF. The project outcomes achieved the result at a similar level from the World Bank's data.

(7) The LCP beneficiary salary range

(Unit: LKR)	Percentage (543 samples)
~9,999	2%
10,000 ~ 19,999	28%
20,000 ~ 29,999	32%
30,000 ~ 39,999	29%
40,000 ~ 49,999	7%
50,000 ~ 59,999	1%
60,000 ~	1%

The overall average wage for beneficiaries was 24,664 LKR which is close to the minimum wage (21,000-27,000LKR) set by the government. The DSS poverty allowance for households with a member with disability requires a household income of 16,191 LKR or less. In such situation, the wages earned by the LCP beneficiaries represent a significant livelihood resource for households experiencing difficult financial situations.

Towards the latter part of the project, success cases with relatively higher wages gradually emerged, with the highest recorded wage being 75,000 LKR. It is hoped that as employment examples across a broader range of industries increase, instances of employment in sectors with higher wage ranges will also grow.

² <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34399>

(8) The rates of the LCP beneficiary promotion and salary increase

	6 months (92 samples)	12 months (36 samples)
Beneficiaries who experienced promotion	3%	8%
Beneficiaries who experienced salary increase	14%	55%

Although the number of samples for which information could be gathered was limited, it was found that over half of the cases experienced a salary increase after continuing employment for over a year. This information has been shared with DSS and DOME as valuable insight for supporting job seekers who frequently change jobs within short periods to achieve longer retention.

(9) The LCP beneficiaries' reasons for leaving the job

	Male beneficiaries (73 samples)	Female beneficiaries (54 samples)
Moving a better job	21%	20%
Health issues	6%	15%
Lack of performance	9%	9%
Company's financial problem	7%	2%
Personal reasons including family issues	36%	33%
Trouble at workplace	15%	11%
Problems on commuting	4%	6%
Further study or training	2%	4%

When examining the reasons for beneficiaries leaving their jobs, various causes were cited, but the most common was 'Personal reasons including family issues', followed by 'moving to a better job'. Considering that half of those who left employment are re-employed, as noted in (9), it is possible that a significant proportion of those answering 'personal reasons' actually included changing jobs. Interviews with companies suggest that many cases such as workers suddenly failing to turn up for work or becoming uncontactable are common in non-disabled workers' resignations as well.

Analyzing reasons for leaving by gender reveals a higher proportion of women resigning due to health issues compared to men. As noted in (3), alongside discrimination against persons with disabilities, gender-related barriers may still be prevalent in Sri Lanka's labour market. It should be added that the ESPD team also examined differences in reasons for leaving across disability types then found that the proportions remained largely same among the types.

(10) The LCP beneficiaries' job retention rate

	6-month retention rate
LCP beneficiaries from Oct 2022 to Oct 2024 (314 cases)	61%

Among the 314 success cases where follow-up surveys were possible, examining data from beneficiaries between the project's inception and October 2024, 61% remained in the same workplace six months later.

As reliable data on workplace retention rates within Sri Lanka's labour market is lacking, comparison with non-disabled workers is difficult, but many company managers positively answered ESPD beneficiaries' performance including longer retention.

Following the project's conclusion, it is requested that DSS and DOME continue follow-up surveys to measure workplace retention rates not only after six months, but also after one and two years, with the aim of utilizing this data to improve the LCP service quality and quantity.

(11) The LCP beneficiaries' reemployment rate

	Got the next job	No work after quitting
Beneficiaries who quit the job within 6 months (54 samples)	56%	44%

A follow-up survey of ESPD beneficiaries who left employment revealed that 56% had found new jobs. This indicates that over half of those who left their jobs have re-entered the workforce, suggesting that LCP serves as a springboard for career development.

Also, some cases have emerged where SSO and HRDO provided support for re-employment. The emergence of such positive examples of post-leaving follow-up and ongoing support is significant in terms of accumulating practical LCP experience. It is hoped that information sharing from JPM and ESU will facilitate the dissemination of this knowledge to other regions.

(12) Status of the project outputs by district

	No. of LCP success cases	Rate of DS offices which have made success case(s)	No. of SIHINA meetings	Rate of DS offices which held SIHINA
Colombo	45	92% (12/13)	8	38% (5/13)
Gampaha	43	92% (12/13)	5	31% (4/13)
Kalutara	27	71% (10/14)	6	7% (1/14)
Matara	84	100% (16/16)	31	100% (16/16)
Galle	28	59% (13/22)	14	54% (12/22)
Hambantota	22	67% (8/12)	17	75% (9/12)
Kurunegala	112	84% (25/30)	24	33% (10/30)
Puttalam	17	50% (8/16)	2	19% (3/16) ³
Anuradhapura	31	65% (15/23)	7	26% (6/23)
Polonnaruwa	3	14% (1/7)	2	29% (2/7)
Kandy	21	70% (14/20)	1	5% (1/20)
Matale	6	46% (5/11)	2	18% (2/11)
Nuwara Eliya	2	33% (2/6)	0	
Ratnapura	52	100% (18/18)	2	11% (2/18)
Kegalle	39	82% (9/11)	1	9% (1/11)
Badulla	6	14% (2/14)	0	
Monaragala	5	36% (4/11)	0	
Jaffna	71	100% (16/16)	6	37% (6/16)
Vavuniya	4	25% (1/4)	0	
Kilinochchi	6	25% (1/4)	1	0% ⁴
Mullativu	0	0% (0/6)	0	
Mannar	11	40% (2/5)	0	
Trincomalee	46	73% (8/11)	2	18% (2/11)
Batticaloa	22	57% (8/14)	0	
Ampara	16	45% (9/20)	0	
Total	719	65% (219/339)	131	24% (82/339)

³ 2DS offices jointly conducted 1 SIHINA meeting

⁴ District Office conducted the SIHINA meeting

By the project's conclusion, LCP had delivered outcomes across 24 districts and 219 divisions. The remaining district, Mullaitivu, located in the Tamil-speaking Northern Province, is an area where many residents rely on agriculture and fishing for their livelihoods. Although it was difficult to create a ESPD success case during the project period, efforts have not been entirely absent, with stakeholders gathering to hold JPM among other activities. Support is now being sought from neighboring district SSO/HRDOs, such as Jaffna, and it is hoped that a success story will emerge post-project.

Since its inaugural meeting in Dehiwala division, Colombo district in 2023, SIHINA gatherings had been held across various locations. However, full-scale implementation began significantly in late 2024, largely due to the Matara district SSO's efforts to organize SIHINA meetings across all divisions within the district, coinciding with a big leap of LCP outcomes in Matara. Initially, meetings were held under central government directives without sufficient ownership among local persons with disabilities or officials. However, as efforts progressed in Matara District, participants who enjoyed SIHINA began sharing information. Officials, noticing this departure from previous approaches, started voluntarily planning subsequent SIHINA meetings. Benefits such as participants employed through the LCP sharing experiences, and participants beginning to secure employment prompted by the participation of company managers, started being shared locally, primarily through WhatsApp groups. This accelerated the organization of meetings in other regions.

In Jaffna, inspired by the ESPD SIHINA video, they produced their own SIHINA video. This was broadcast on local TV news, demonstrating how persons with disabilities and administrative officials are collaborating to disseminate information.

(13) Progress of the project outputs by year

	2023	2024
ESPD success cases	128	262
Female beneficiary rate in the total cases	33%	40%
Salary average (LKR)	22,907 (42 samples)	25,338 (70 samples)
6-month retention rate	59% (108 samples)	68% (70 samples)
EPF/ETF coverage rate	24% (118 samples)	30% (252 samples)

SSOs and HRDOs island-wide who previously dismissed the biased notion that “people with disabilities could never work” without any actions about it, have now spent over two years visiting companies alongside colleagues to engage directly with job seekers and companies affected. By learning from and sharing their own successes and failures, as well as those

around them, DSS and DOME have accumulated the experience and insight.

There is also a growing awareness of the importance of accurately monitoring and evaluating work that was previously glossed over with artificial reports. An intriguing synergy between LCP and SIHINA is beginning to emerge as well.

It is expected that DSS/DOME will lead continuous efforts to enhance the quality and quantity of LCP services by developing the function of ESU.

6. Self-evaluation by the project team in accordance with the DAC evaluation criteria

This chapter summarizes the project team's self-evaluation on the achievements by following the 6 criteria set by OECD⁵ in 2019.

There is inherent limitation in objectivity when evaluations are conducted by the project team itself, it is recommend referring to reports from other projects in the same field as comparative references.

(1) RELEVANCE

The beneficiaries of this project are persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka, who are often left behind from the socio-economic development process. ESPD supported their equitable access to employment opportunities, rather than providing temporary charitable assistance. President Anura's inaugural address in September 2024 explicitly stated the need to 'provide a robust safety net for persons with disabilities requiring social protection,' making the project consistent with the current government's policy.

During the ESPD period, when it became apparent that employment support for persons with disabilities could not be implemented solely by DSS, activities proceeded through appropriate coordination, such as establishing a collaborative framework with DOME. Furthermore, when changing approaches, sufficient explanations were provided to stakeholders, and the appropriateness of the changes was demonstrated and understanding gained through sharing the specific implementation process and the emergence of results on LCP and SIHINA.

In light of these circumstances, the project's relevance can be considered high.

(2) COHERENCE

Japan's 'Country Development Cooperation Policy for Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka' announced in January 2025, sets 'Building Economic and Social Foundation to Achieve Sustainable Economic Growth' as Fundamental Principle of the ODA and 'Enhancing Social Resilience' as Priority Area (2), demonstrating a high degree of compatibility with this project. Furthermore, JICA possesses a long-standing track record in Sri Lanka, having dispatched volunteers and implemented grassroots technical cooperations in this sector. It is anticipated that the cooperative assets developed through ESPD could be utilized in future initiatives.

Moreover, the employment of persons with disabilities is explicitly stated in SDG Target 8.5, indicating that the project's approach is highly aligned with international frameworks.

With these circumstances, the relevance of this project is considered high.

⁵ [https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC\(2019\)58/FINAL/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC(2019)58/FINAL/en/pdf)

(3) EFFECTIVENESS

In this project, the newly established ESU has played a crucial role for supporting the LCP activities on both the district and division levels. Through its accurate monitoring activities, the ESPD team achieved results significantly exceeding the project's target indicators.

The project's effectiveness is high, given that it has achieved its outcomes and that the programme and implementation structure generating these results have been approved as a government program.

(4) EFFICIENCY

The initial project plan intended to deploy three Japanese experts, but the majority of the period was managed with two.

The Sri Lankan side only assigned three SSOs out of the five promised by DSS, and their travel expenses were scarcely allocated, necessitating support from the Japanese side.

Although the planned number of personnel were not assigned, the project objectives were achieved through the dedicated efforts of three SSO and one HRDO. Consequently, efficiency can be judged as relatively high. However, the project team bore a significant burden compensating for this unforeseen staffing shortfall. When considering future support for Sri Lanka, it is deemed necessary to engage in thorough discussions and take decisive actions to ensure the commitments by the Sri Lankan side to a responsible implementation structure.

(5) IMPACT

Prejudice and discrimination against persons with disabilities remain deeply rooted within Sri Lankan society. During the project period, many discriminatory remarks and actions were encountered by the project team. Some cases even involved government officers and family members, who should have been advocates for persons with disabilities, instead disregarding their human rights and hindering their social participation.

While such conditions cannot be changed in a short period, the project consistently conveyed the message that social services should not be residual or charity-based, one-way support, but rather dialogue-based, respecting the human rights of beneficiaries. Careful observation is needed to see what effect enabling persons with disabilities to raise their voices and participate in society through LCP and SIHINA will have on Sri Lankan society going forward.

Furthermore, by prioritizing gender equality throughout project activities and emphasizing the need to support female job seekers, the proportion of women among success stories has improved annually, achieving the project's target indicators.

While the impact currently being realized can be judged as high, it is still too early to determine whether these outcomes will translate into medium- to long-term social impact. It

is requested that the impact be evaluated based on the results of continued close monitoring by JICA HQ and Sri Lanka Office, focusing on how rights-based social support and equitable support for women with disabilities become established in Sri Lanka going forward, and what role the outcomes of this project play in that process.

(6) SUSTAINABILITY

Regarding sustainability, the establishment of a public framework to deliver project outcomes while conducting operations, along with obtaining the government approval for the structure, suggests that the measures achievable by a technical cooperation project team have been implemented to a high standard.

However, considering the circumstances in Sri Lanka, it is not possible to be very optimistic about sustainability. Welfare administration operates under an inefficient system with duplication between the central and provincial governments. Furthermore, recruitment for both SSO and HRDO positions has been suspended. In districts and divisional offices with vacancies, other officials are taking on these roles concurrently. We have also observed cases where SSOs are occupied with other duties due to staff shortages. Of all 25 districts, Mullativu was the only one where no success cases were achieved during the ESPD period due to a vacancy in the District HRDO. Similarly, Ratmalana division in Colombo district was the only one without results because the HRDO position was vacant and the SSO retired without a successor being appointed, leading to other officials taking on these roles.

Unless the government establishes an efficient system aligned with a medium-to-long-term perspective to secure and develop necessary personnel, ensuring the continuity of social services will be difficult. As it is currently challenging to assess sustainability, it is requested to JICA for conducting careful observation that takes these difficult circumstances into account.

7. Recommendations to DSS and DOME

(1) Labour-Welfare cooperation structure based on Employment Support Unit

The inter-departmental structure was the most important foundation of ESPD's practical achievements. Without the linkage, LCP and SIHINA could not have been successful as those are today.

If DSS or DOME start losing the communication set by ESPD or start working on employment of persons with disabilities separately, ESU would be a unit which loses its mission and capacity, then could get inactive with artificial reports.

It is the responsibility of DSS/DOME management to take a right initiative to sustain and develop the services with a robust relationship.

(2) Practical monitoring system and communication among the stakeholders

In 2023, the ESPD team identified that 79% (36/46) of the reported cases were artificial. In 2025 the figure dramatically improved to 33% (72/219), this is the result of tireless effort of SSOs and HRDO at ESU for conducting follow up calls and communication with the stakeholders. However, there are still incorrect reports at the point of the completion of ESPD. DSS and DOME must recognize that the monitoring function of ESU is the core of LCP and pay attention not to deteriorate its quality and quantity.

(3) Update of the poverty allowance management

The follow-up surveys including the visits to Matara found that many job seekers with disabilities and their families in poverty hesitate to get a job because they are afraid of losing the poverty allowance.

Many of the allowance beneficiaries worry the situation that they cannot receive the allowance again and face financial challenges in case they cannot continue to work. This situation also causes the artificial report to ESU, some of the allowance beneficiaries tend to hesitate disclosing their employment status not to lose the welfare benefit.

In order to encourage those potential job seekers to get a job without such worries, let them get out of the poverty situation by themselves and efficiently secure the allowance budget for the destitute group, DSS needs to make efforts to set up more practical and gradual management on the allowance transfer and monitoring.

(4) Importance of the right-and-dialogue-based service and Reasonable Accommodation

Through the ESPD activities since 2021, the team have met stakeholders who have biased ideas such as "social service is like a charity program" or "persons with disabilities are needy and do not deserve the life as we enjoy". They do not express such ideas but behave based on

those thoughts as if they were a religious leader. This is why they do not listen to the people who need the services and design the services and events without counting on them.

Every welfare/labour service must be designed through the communication with the stakeholders on an equal basis. In order to clarify this principle, the ESPD team developed the movie on Reasonable Accommodation (ESPD 10) with the advices of Prof. Kawauchi of Toyo University who has been working for advocating the rights of persons with disabilities in Japan.

It is strongly recommended to utilize the movie for human resource development and staff education from the ministry level to the grass-root level.

(5) Further development of SIHINA as a social/financial empowerment measure for persons with disabilities

SIHINA was launched by Ms. Anoja, ex-Director of Department of Social Services, and the new approach for local gatherings of persons with disabilities has spread through the project period, counting more than 110 meetings island-wide.

SIHINA has diverse potential not only for promoting employment for persons with disabilities, but for social participation, empowerment, peer communication and community unity.

This initiative cannot be sustained without the DSS-DOME cooperation framework and the two organizations have the responsibility to develop SIHINA for a more inclusive Sri Lankan society.

Annex

1. Concept Note on ESU

Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment – Concept Note

1. Name of the Project - Establishing the Employment Support Unit

2. Division - Social Empowerment

3. Location of the Project - Social Service Department

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4. Introduction of the Project

4.1 Justification

In order to include the Persons with Disabilities active in the society it is necessary to make them independent as part of the economic development of the country. It will make a positive and sustainable change in their families while making them a part of the work force of the country. Yet, it was noticed there was no proper job support system implemented in the country in order to provide job support to the Persons with Disabilities therefore most of them were left behind from society with low social participation. On the other hand, even though there are private companies who are willing to provide job support for the Persons with Disabilities, they were not able to locate the suitable Job Seekers with Disabilities with ease.

Therefore, in order to bridge the gap between the private companies and the Job Seekers with Disabilities, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in collaboration with Social Service Department and the Department of Manpower and Employment initiated the Project for providing the Employment Support for the Persons with Disabilities (ESPD) in November 2021. This project is mainly focused on improving the job support given by the private companies to recruit more Persons with Disabilities to the workforce of the country. In this regard, the Department of Social Services and Department of Manpower and Employment entered in to an agreement and as a result, the Social Service Officers and Human Resource Development Officers at the district and divisional secretariat levels, have made more than 120 success cases through the Linkage Creation Program by the end of 2023. Also, the Job Coach Trainings are held to inform and encourage the employers while increasing the retention rate of the employed Persons with Disabilities. The retention rate of these recruited Workers with Disabilities has a direct positive impact on the sustainable development of these workers and their families as well.

It is expected to maintain a proper and effective coordination at the national level by Social Service Officers and Human Resource Development Officers within the Social Service Department, in order to keep a continuous employment support process. Furthermore, the National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities (NSPD) will also be engaged in promoting the employment support of Persons with Disabilities by contributing to the salary offered to the Workers with Disabilities by private companies with the aim of encouraging private companies who are willing to employ them. This process is also coordinated at the field level Social Service Officers. Accordingly, this project will be implemented effectively with the coordination and guidance of the officers of the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Manpower and Employment (DoME), with the contribution of the National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities (NSPD).

4.2 Project objectives

- Build an inclusive Employment Support System to support the Job Seekers with Disabilities to find jobs in the private sector companies.
- With the collaboration of DSS and DoME, find suitable Job Seekers with Disabilities and suitable vacancies through the Linkage Creation Program.
- Support to build policies within the country to provide job support to the Persons with Disabilities.

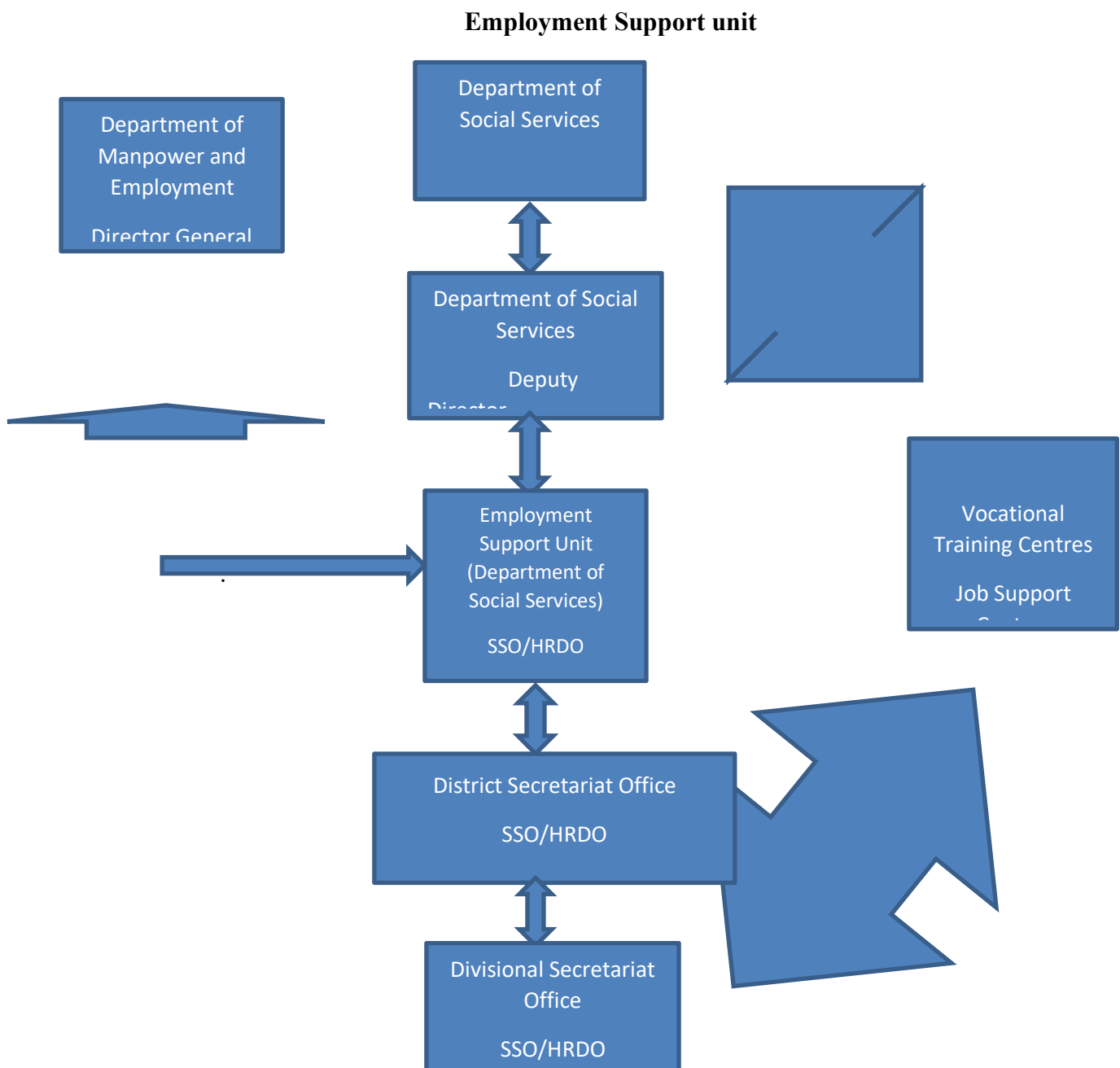
- Increase the retention level of Workers with Disabilities, introduce methods for career development through Sihina Program.

4.3 The problems to be addressed

Since there was no proper job support system implemented in the country in order to provide job support to the Persons with Disabilities, therefore most of them were left behind from society with lesser social participation. On the other hand, even though there are private companies who are willing to provide job support for the Persons with Disabilities, they are not able to locate the suitable Job Seekers with Disabilities with ease.

4.4 Method of implementation

An Employment Support Unit is expected to be established in the Department of Social Services to facilitate the management, supervision and regulation of the project for the promotion of employment support for Persons with Disabilities as mentioned below.



Conducting the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) once in 03 months for the promotion of employment support of Persons with Disabilities in Sri Lanka. As the Stakeholders of the meeting ; Secretary or a representative of the Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, the Director General of the Department of Manpower and Employment, the Director of Social Services, the Director of the National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities, and the officers of the Employment Support Unit.

Linkage Creation Program (LCP), i.e. Social Service Officers working under the Department of Social Services and Human Resource Development Officers working under the Department of Manpower and Employment, work together on promoting job support of the Persons with Disabilities. The National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities also works together in these duties.

- To identify and implement various tactics and strategies related to job matching, and job promotion.
- The Department of Social Services, Department of Manpower and Employment and National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities jointly conduct monthly progress review meetings at head office level.
- Conducting joint progress review meeting (JPM) once in 03 months with SSOs and HRDOs at the district secretariat level.
- Encouraging officers, employers and Job Seekers with Disabilities by sharing the successful cases obtained at the divisional secretariat level with other officers.
- Regulation of statistical data on Persons with Disabilities and employers.
- Establishment, operation and regulation of pre-employment training centres.
- Analysing, monitoring and following up the achieved progress via officers, employers, Workers with Disabilities and their family members
- Appreciate the officers, employers, Workers with Disabilities through the annual award ceremony.
- Implementation of various programs to meet job Seekers with Disabilities and employers.
- Coordinating support services such as career counselling for the Persons with Disabilities.

4.5 Targeted Beneficiaries

- Persons with Disabilities Island wide who are willing to find jobs
- Persons with Disabilities who are facing different challenges and problems at the workplace.
- Companies who are willing to provide job support for Persons with Disabilities.

4.6 Accordance of the project to national and international priorities

- 10.2 Sustainable Development - Social and economic Inclusion, empowerment and development of every person without any boundaries.
- 8.5 Sustainable Development - Provide sustainable and suitable job support for the Persons with Disabilities.
- 1996 Act.28 Act for protecting human rights - Reasonable Accommodation
- National Employment Policy - Chapter No 15

5. Expected Output

- 2024 - 150 Recruitments

- 2025 - 180 Recruitments
- 2026 - 200 Recruitments
- KPIs for the following years will be set in 2026.

6. Expected Outcome

Create an Employment Support system accessible for all the job Seekers and Workers with Disabilities which respects their dignity and their right to decision making.

7. Expected total expenditure: (In detailed in annex 01)

- Joint coordination meeting = Rs. 20000.00
- Joint Progress meeting = Rs. 2341200.00
- Administrative expenses = Rs. 50000.00
- Fuel expenses = Rs. 200000.00
- Stationary and other expenses (Promotional materials, translations etc.) = Rs. 110000.00
- Total = Rs. 2721200.00

8. Timeline for the implementation (Companies, Stakeholders, beneficiaries etc.)

Activity	Month											
	J a n u a r y	F e b r u a r y	M a r c h	A p r i l	M a y	J u n e	J u l y	A u g u s t	S e p t e m b e r	O c t o b e r	N o v e m b e r	D e c e m b e r
Conduct monthly Progress Review Meetings (DOME/DSS)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
-Conduct Joint Coordination Meeting -Conduct Joint Progress Review Meetings			√			√			√			√
-Review, analyse and double check the data collected by officers through contacting the Workers with Disabilities, their families, and companies - Obtain, analyse and follow up information on Persons with Disabilities who are employed after completing the vocational training.	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sharing the success cases among the divisions in order to motivate the job seekers, officers and the companies.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Conduct annual award ceremonies to appreciate the contribution given by the job seekers, officers and the companies									√			

Project Expenditure

The staff and the equipment provided for the Project for Promoting the Employment Support For Persons with Disabilities (ESPD) will also be used for the proposed Employment Support Unit. Maintaining the Retention rate of the recruited Workers with Disabilities is also a very difficult task therefore the necessary support and guidance should be provided with constant follow-up. Providing job opportunities for the Persons with Disabilities is extremely important for them and for their families. It has a great impact on the economy of the country as well.

3.1 Joint coordination meeting

Once in every three months with the participation of the Secretary of the ministry or a representative, Director General of the Department of Manpower and Employment, Director of the Department of Social Services, Director of the National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities (NSPD), Employment Promotion Unit Team

(Rs.250*20*4)
20000.00

= ௪௧

3.2 Joint Progress meeting

i. Together with Social Service Officers and Human Resource Development Officers conducting the Joint Progress Meetings at District Level once every three months. Tea and Lunch for 25 districts.

(02 officers from 340 Divisional Secretariats and
02 officers from 25 district secretariats)

(730* ௪௧750*4)

= ௪௧ 2190000.00

ii. Participation of 3 officers Employment Support Unit for Joint Progress Meetings . (1 trip per month , 12 trips per year)

(For 02 days including including the meals for morning, afternoon, night)

(௪௧ 2100*2*3*12)
151200.00

= ௪௧

3.3 Administrative Expenses
50000.00

= ௪௧

3.4 Fuel Expenses
200000.00

= ௪௧

3.5 Stationary and other expenses (Promotion,brochures, translations)
110000.00

= ௪௧

₺2721200.00
=====

Total =

9. Approval of the Head of the Department

Signature

Name

Designation

Date

10. Approval of the Additional Secretary in charge

Signature

Name

Designation

Date

11. Approval of the Planning Branch of the ministry

Signature

Name

Designation

Date

12. Approval of the Secretary of the Ministry

Signature

Name

Designation

Date