

prepare a form for that job, prepared personal documents that are required by that job, and guided me on how/what to talk when meeting with the recruitment person. With EPC support, the [bag producing] factory accepted me to work in their place. I could not be any happier having this job – I earn better income that I do not have to constantly worry about meeting my family basic needs. What is even more special is that the job condition is much better. I work in the shade, and I have weekend to relax. And this is the best I could ask for being a person with a disability”.



### Significance of the change

The change is considered to be **significant** not on big number but on the impact of beneficiaries’ life with evidence suggesting that the initiative is holistic as it is supported with the government ownership and systematic engagement from the private sectors and key development partners. The target beneficiaries are engaged and benefited from the local authorities’ knowledge and involvement.

### Level of ACCESS contribution

The level of ACCESS contribution to the change is assessed as **significant**. Those interviewed believe that without EPC/ LFTW efforts and initiatives, the reported change would not have happened. Despite the significant impact these efforts might make, functionality of the initiatives need to be ensured beyond the program life for the persons with disabilities to continue enjoy such benefits.

## Story of Significant Change:

### Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities through Job Coaching

#### Limited opportunities for employment among persons with disabilities

Across Cambodia, persons with disabilities account approximately for 9.5% of the total population (CDHS, 2014). Persons with disabilities face significant challenges when attempting to access economic opportunities. Although the government-issued quota for employment of Persons with Disabilities has helped to increase inclusive opportunities in the public entities, the inclusive practices in the private sector remain few. The biggest challenge of this slow absorption in the private sector includes but is not limited to the lack of knowledge and skills of Persons with Disabilities that meet the job requirements and the lack of support mechanism for this group to access job opportunities. This story highlights a significant change in improving access to employment opportunities for Persons with Disabilities through a Job Coach project by Light for the World (LFTW) and its partner, Essential Personnel Cambodia (EPC) financed by ACCESS programme. The project operated in three target provinces – Siem Reap, Kampong Cham, and Kampong Speu.

EPC is a Non-Government Organisation that is dedicated to empowering young Cambodians with disabilities through education and vocational training, leading to employment and independence. EPC’s goal is to ensure that young people with disabilities access education, vocational skills development, and employment to ensure their economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and full community participation.

#### Systematic approaches for employment of persons with disabilities

Before partnering with LFTW, EPC’s approaches toward identifying job opportunities for persons with disabilities relied primarily on its immediate connections and networks coupled with internet-based job searching. This meant that EPC could only introduce to its beneficiaries a limited number and diversity of job opportunities. With ACCESS’s financial support through LFTW, EPC’s approaches toward improving access to employment opportunities for its beneficiaries become more systematic and of better quality. Firstly, EPC developed a Job Coach Manual and established vocational training courses with its partners to equip the beneficiaries with appropriate skills and to get ready for job hunting. Secondly, EPC facilitated

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the establishment of a National Employment Forum Committee (NEFC) chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation. The members of this NEFC include relevant ministries, local and international NGOs, private sector employers. NEFC was established as a platform to link persons with disabilities with employers who are committed to disability inclusion in their businesses. NEFC also plays an important role in providing soft and hard skills training by coordinating with partnered service providers to refer the unskilled job seekers to get the required training courses and get them ready for job placement processes. Both the Job Coach Manual and NEFC have been officially recognized by the national government. These two approaches are functioning concurrently and complementing each with an aim to improve access to economic opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.



Mr. Yang Vuo, Program manager of EPC providing training to persons with disabilities beneficiaries on getting to know roles and responsibilities of job seekers

To benefit from the above initiatives, Persons with Disabilities were first identified by EPC with local authorities' collaboration. The identified beneficiaries were then assessed against eligibility criteria for a job coaching or vocational training program. Those who already have skills were mostly qualified for a job coaching program in which they are put through a 3-day training activity. In this 3-day training, they were assisted and supported by job coaches to search for a job that best match their skills, prepare job applications, and get ready for a job interview. Those who do not have any skills, on the other hand, generally are referred to a vocational training program that last in between three to six months with allowance support that covers both the vocational training fees and living expenses. The vocational training topics mostly covered sewing, Ms Office, online marketing on social media and graphic design, farming, nursery, and laundry, etc. Once these beneficiaries are ready, they then connected to certified employers through NEFC and EPC coordination processes.

1 Identification and selection of persons with disabilities were done through Provincial Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, District Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, commune chiefs, disability networks, and DPOs. Although all types of disabilities are welcome, most of the selected beneficiaries are person with physical disabilities.

Between September 2019 and December 2020, EPC identified and supported 216 Persons with Disabilities from across the three target provinces to attend and complete the job coaching activities. This resulted in 30 Persons with Disabilities to be officially employed by the certified employers, 4 to be referred to vocational training courses, and the rest to be put on the waiting list to be matched with potential employers. The program expects larger numbers in the future, though it is important to note that such inclusion pathways are challenged by systemic prejudice. More time and resources are needed to see greater numbers of success stories, though the few successes so far demonstrate the strong foundation established by LWFT and EPC.



8 candidates with disabilities waiting for job interview at Win Grown Factory

For many persons with disabilities, being officially employed with appropriate work condition is beyond what they could imagine. For some, getting a job can be an unrealistic hope despite they have all the skills required by the job, merely just because they have some forms of disabilities. For others, having a job while being identified as a Persons with Disabilities is a privilege that one could ask for let alone inquiring whether the job comes with a good condition. As an example, Ms. Sina was trained in sewing. She graduated from her sewing training course in 2019 from Japan-Cambodia Interactive Association Training Center. Despite her institutionally recognized sewing skill, Sina could not find a job she wanted until she was introduced to EPC. Sina joined the job search training program and was coached on preparing a job application and for an interview. With EPC's support and her dedication, Sina was accepted by Fair Weave Shop located Phnom Penh. As a parentless person with disabilities who relies on limited support from married siblings and an aunt, being able to earn her living on her own is Sina's biggest dream in life. So, being accepted by Fair Weave business is, therefore, the most exciting moment in her life that she cried out "my dream finally comes true because I can earn my living and that I am doing ok even if without anyone's support".

Mr. Sokha, another candidate under Job Coach project, added that "I was actually a guard for a restaurant. I earned an income from it, but it somehow doesn't make my end meets, plus the work condition was not so good. I was in the sun all day and there was no weekend for me. I wanted to change to a better job, but I could not find one until I get to know EPC team through my commune chief. EPC team helped me with identifying the job that suits my disability condition. Once we found the job that suits my condition, they helped me to



Ms. Sina at her workstation, Fair Weave Shop