

TITLE

A multifunctional hub towards the open labour market
South Africa: The Living Link employment model

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Living Link is a South African non-profit organization that implements a model of supported employment for young people with disabilities. The process begins with life- and work-skills training, continues with hands-on experience through internships, and goes on to formal placement in the open labour market. Notably, candidates who are placed in employment earn the same salary as non-disabled colleagues. In 2015 alone, approximately 50 people were hired in various forms of employment, including several with permanent working contracts.

FACTS & FIGURES

In 2015, The Living Link achieved the following results:

- 14 members were successfully placed in a year-long internship with a major insurance company and 9 at a major cleaning group
- 17 permanent appointments and 16 contractual appointments were concluded
- There were 4 volunteer placements, 3 of which will be paid monthly stipends as of 30 June 2016
- In 2016, 62 placements in various forms of employment have already been made to date

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Traditionally, protected or sheltered employment has been the predominant model for people with intellectual disabilities in South Africa. Jobseekers are often excluded from suitable open labour market opportunities because in most cases they are unable to meet the educational requirements. Further, many employers have the misconception that people with disabilities are not employable or that such appointments are high risk.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The Living Link employment model includes job analysis, job matching, interview support, placement, co-worker training, and advocacy, as well as the recommendation of assistive devices and the provision of career planning. Notably, the model also includes one-on-one professional job coaching as may be needed once a member has been placed, which differs greatly from traditional South African employment models for people with intellectual disabilities. In this way, these employees participate on equal terms in the open labour market.

The Living Link model is continuously presented to major companies, small to medium-size businesses, recruitment agencies, government departments, and non-profit organizations **that** might be involved in the employment of young adults with intellectual disabilities.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

Currently, 65 per cent of the organization's annual revenue is created through job coaching fees, annual membership payments, training fees, and fundraising social events. One of the next goals of The Living Link is to create an employment division that generates sufficient income to cover all its expenses.

The organization has shown remarkable growth over the past three years, and the addition of a second vocational training course in 2015 increased the number of students by 35 per cent. As a result, employment figures more than doubled in 2015 compared to 2014.

QUOTE

"We now have four Living Link 'Angels' at Orico. They are reliable, punctual, respectful, and hardworking, and they spontaneously participate in office social activities as well."

— Ms. Welhma Strauss, Senior Manager, Claims Department, Orico.

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