

**CPDI RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**FOR**  
**THE ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF**  
**DISTRICT WELFARE AND REHABILITATION UNIT**  
**(DWRU)**

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### Background: 'Impairments',

### 'Disability and the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022:

In Pakistan, 'disability' is largely seen as a medical condition. people do not distinguish between the 'impairment' and 'disability'.

People are 'disabled' not because of their 'impairments'. They are rendered disabled because of the barriers in physical and social environment. These barriers are both in physical and social environment.

There are buildings with stairs as their only entrance, buses that a wheelchair user cannot enter, discriminatory employment practices, or books that are not available in braille, to name a few examples. Access to knowledge can be made possible through a variety of ways.

One can have access to a book by Braille, by listening to a recorded book and by scanning it and then reading it through a screen reader.

Similarly, PWDs, along with the physical barriers, have to face attitudinal barriers. They are pitied upon and considered fit only for charity.

In short, 'disability is not in the people, but in the physical and social environment in shape of man-made barriers. These man-made barriers can be removed and PWDS can be made functionally active and productive citizens of Pakistan. The primary objective of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 is to empower PWDS by removing access barriers.

### Accessibility of Public and Private Buildings:

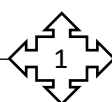
Before dwelling into the specific functions of the DWRU under the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022, it is important to highlight that rights of PWDs can only be protected if public and private buildings in the districts are made accessible in accordance with the provisions of the disability Act and the Accessibility Code of Pakistan, 2006. It is a common knowledge that our public buildings, roads, parks, places of entertainment, modes of transportation, hospitals, schools, workplaces are not accessible for PWDs. As a consequence, they are not seen in the public as they are forced to stay at home.

Our legislative framework requires our built environment to be accessible for PWDs. Even then, our public places are not accessible for PWDs, sick and elderly. With regard to the accessibility of public buildings, Section 20 (2)(o) of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 is as under:

“(o) ensure that all existing public buildings, roads, parks, places of entertainment, modes of transportation, hospitals, schools, workplaces, communication and information related services are made accessible in accordance with the standards, guidelines and requirements referred to in the Code within a period not exceeding five years from the date of promulgation of this Act”

The 'code' referred to here is the Accessibility Code of Pakistan, 2006. Section 3.3 states “Within the limits of the economic and administrative capacity and development, the appropriate Governments and local regulatory authorities, with a view towards removal of physical barriers and creation of barrier-free environments, shall undertake or cause to undertake acts, steps and procedures for the effective implementation of the accessibility code by the owners, occupants, tenants developers, planners, designers, architects, engineers, builders, custodians and manager of these buildings, facilities and areas so required to be built or modified in accordance with the provisions of the accessibility code”.

The DWRU will have to ensure the accessibility of public and private buildings in the districts in accordance with the provisions of the disability Act and the Accessibility Code of Pakistan, 2006 to effectively protect and promote rights of PWDs.



### Establishment of District Welfare and Rehabilitation Unit:

In compliance with the legal requirements outlined in the notification, issued by Social Welfare Department, Punjab on November 16, 2023, the establishment and operationalization of the District Welfare and Rehabilitation Units (DWRUs) under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioners, in each district of Punjab, are essential for the effective implementation of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022.

The DWRU is a critical component under Section 24 of the Act and is vested with adequate powers and is entrusted with specific responsibilities to empower and assist persons with disabilities in the district by removing access barriers in physical and social environment.

Based on the provisions outlined in the Act and the terms of reference (TORs) for the DWRU as mentioned in the Notification, CPDI recommend the following actions:

### Constitution of DWRU:

As PWDs have diverse needs which are characterized by nature of their different disabilities, the composition of DWRU envisaged in the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 in a manner that it takes on board diverse stakeholders.

It is recommended that the Deputy Commissioner, serving as the Chairperson of the DWRU, takes proactive steps to ensure the unit's effective establishment and functioning in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

CPDI recommends that The Deputy Commissioner, being a key figure in this endeavor, should prioritize the following actions:

### Adherence to the Composition Envisaged in Section 24 (i) of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022:

The effectiveness of DWRU in protecting and promoting rights of PWDs will be dependent on the strict adherence to the composition specified in Section 24 (i) of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022. This includes the inclusion of heads of relevant government departments, social workers, persons with disabilities, parents of persons with disabilities, and a representative of the local government.

### Holistic Representation:

The effectiveness of the DWRU will also be dependent on how effectively diverse set of stakeholders are engaged to protect rights of PWDs. Therefore, CPDI recommends that Deputy Commissioner as Chairperson of the DWRU to Engages heads of critical government departments such as District Zakat, Technical and Vocational Training Authority, Primary and

Secondary Healthcare Department, School Education Department, Sports, Industries, Commerce, Investment, Skills Development, and Labor and Human Resource Department.

### Inclusion of Social Workers:

CPDI recognizes the importance of social workers within the DWRU. Therefore, CPDI recommends incorporation of qualified and experienced social workers in DWRU so that it could benefit from their valuable insights into the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Their input will be highly valuable in contributing to the development and implementation of effective welfare programs.

### Active Participation of Persons with Disabilities:

Without the active involvement of persons with disabilities in the DWRU, it will not be able to make headway in protecting and promoting rights of PWDs. CPDI recommends to ensure representation of PWDs in DWRU from various disability categories, including visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, and intellectual disability, to integrate firsthand experiences into the decision-making processes.

### Nomination of Parents' Representatives:

CPDI recommends the nomination of representatives from among parents of persons with disabilities. Their unique perspectives, representing the familial aspect and providing insights into the daily challenges faced by families supporting persons with disabilities, will significantly contribute to the quality of debates in DWRU about the issues of PWDs and their families.

### Implementation of Section 24(3) of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022:

The effectiveness of DWRU will largely depend on how, Deputy Commissioner, as Chairperson ensures that DWRU performs its functions:

#### Collection of data of establishments for the purposes of the Act:

The DWRU has been entrusted to collect data of establishments in the district for the employment of PWDs. This section pertains to the understanding of the 'Establishments' as defined under the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 and the powers of the DWRU with regard to ensuring employment of PWDs

#### Definition of 'Establishments' under Section 2(f) of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022:

According to Section 2(f) of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022, "Establishments" means any place, private or public, where economic activities are carried out, or where persons are employed for any work. This includes both the public and private sectors.

#### Empowerment of DWRU for Employment of PWDs:

As the Chairperson of the District Welfare and Rehabilitation Unit (DWRU), the Deputy Commissioner is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the collection of data of establishments for the purposes of the Act, particularly concerning the employment of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The Act, in Section 31, mandates that not less than three percent of the total number of persons employed by an establishment at any time shall be PWDs.

Here's how the DWRU is empowered to take steps for the employment of PWDs based on the provisions of the Act:

#### *Quota Allocation and Recruitment Procedure (Section 31):*

##### *Equal Distribution of Reserved Posts (Section 31):*

The DWRU must ensure that the reserved posts are divided equally among visually impaired persons, hearing-impaired persons, persons with other physical disabilities, and intellectually impaired persons.

##### *Registration with the Unit (Section 31):*

Persons with disabilities whose names have been registered with the Unit and declared fit to work are to be employed by establishments in line with the specified quota.

##### *Ensuring Equal Terms and Conditions (Section 31):*

Persons with disabilities employed against reserved posts are entitled to terms and conditions not less favorable than those of other persons employed in similar posts.

##### *Fund Contribution by Non-Compliant Establishments (Section 2 and 32):*

Establishments failing to employ the required percentage of PWDs must contribute to the 'Persons with Disabilities Rehabilitation Fund'. Section 32 of the Act states that any "establishment that does not employ persons with disabilities as required under section 31 shall, on a monthly basis, pay into the Fund, a sum of money not less than the Minimum Wages notified by the Government under the Punjab Minimum Wages Act, 2019, or a sum of money not less than what it would have paid as salary or wages to a 'Person with Disabilities' had he been employed, whichever is greater".

In light of these provisions, the Deputy Commissioner, as the Chairperson of DWRU, plays a pivotal role in enforcing these mandates, ensuring establishments comply with the employment quota, and taking appropriate measures to empower PWDs in the workforce

#### Facilitation in Employment and Training of PWDs:

Section 24 of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 requires the DWRU to facilitate PWDs in employment and training. CPDI recommends that the Deputy Commissioner, as the Chairperson of the DWRU, ensures that DWRU takes proactive steps to facilitate persons with disabilities through various modes regarding employment and training. The focus should be on creating an inclusive environment that caters to the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities.

#### Tailored Employment Programs:

PWDs face different barriers according to the nature of their disabilities. Therefore, DWRU should implement specialized employment programs catering to different disabilities, ensuring inclusivity in both public and private sectors. These programs should be tailored to the unique requirements of each disability category.

#### Training Initiatives:

DWRU should initiate training programs that equip persons with disabilities with the necessary skills for employment. In this regard, DWRU should collaborate with vocational training authorities and relevant government departments to design and implement training initiatives that address the specific needs and capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

#### Engagement with Private Sector:

It is recommended that DWRU actively engages with the private sector to encourage the adoption of inclusive employment practices.

#### Awareness Campaigns:

DWRU should conduct awareness campaigns to educate employers and the general public about the capabilities and potential of persons with disabilities. The focus should be on removing access barriers that render people disabled and not on the impairments. It should promote a positive and inclusive perception about PWDs to eliminate barriers to employment and training opportunities.

#### Referral of Persons with Disabilities for Medical Treatment and Financial Assistance:

To address the holistic well-being of persons with disabilities, CPDI recommends the following actions regarding the referral of individuals for medical treatment and financial assistance:

##### Medical Referrals:

DWRU should establish a system for referring persons with disabilities to appropriate medical treatment facilities. It should collaborate with healthcare departments to ensure that individuals receive timely and specialized medical care, considering the nature of their disabilities.

##### Financial Assistance Programs:

DWRU should facilitate access to financial assistance programs for persons with disabilities. In this regard, it should establish partnerships with relevant government departments and philanthropic organizations to provide financial support that addresses the unique needs of individuals with disabilities.

##### Coordination with Social Welfare Organizations:

DWRU should collaborate with social welfare organizations to enhance the reach and effectiveness of medical treatment and financial assistance programs. Furthermore, it should leverage the resources and expertise of NGOs to provide comprehensive support to persons with disabilities.

#### Maintenance of Database of Persons with Disabilities Issued Certificates:

One of the major problems in protecting and promoting rights of PWDs is lack of proper data about PWDs. In adherence to Section 24 of the Act, CPDI recommends the establishment and meticulous maintenance of a database of persons with disabilities who have been issued certificates by the Board:

#### Database Management System:

DWRU should maintain a robust database management system to organize information about persons with disabilities. It should ensure that the database is secure, accessible, and regularly updated to reflect the current status of individuals with disabilities in the district.

#### Integration with Certification Process:

PWDs and their families do not know the process of getting disability certificates. Furthermore, as things stand at the moment, the Social Welfare department does not take proactive steps to facilitate PWDs in getting access to disability certificates. Therefore, DWRU should integrate the database with the certification process to facilitate seamless record-keeping. Furthermore, it should ensure that information on issued certificates, including the type and degree of disability, is accurately captured.

#### Facilitation of Persons with Disabilities through Different Modes Regarding Employment and Training:

In alignment with Section 24 of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022, and the role of the District Welfare and Rehabilitation Unit (DWRU), the following recommendations are provided to ensure effective facilitation of persons with disabilities in accessing employment and training opportunities:

#### Collaborative Rehabilitation Efforts:

Section 24 of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 requires the DWRU to undertake collaborative initiatives for the rehabilitation of PWDs. In this connection, CPDI makes following recommendations:

#### Engagement with Chamber of Commerce:

DWRU should establish connections with the Chamber of Commerce to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in economic activities. It should encourage businesses to create accessible workplaces and participate in initiatives that support the rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

#### Partnerships with NGOs:

DWRU should collaborate with NGOs specializing in disability rehabilitation. It should leverage the expertise of these organizations to design and implement rehabilitation programs, including skill development, assistive technology provision, and vocational training.

#### Involvement of Philanthropists:

DWRU should also engage philanthropists to support rehabilitation initiatives.

#### Redressal of Grievances of Persons with Disabilities:

Section 24 empowers DWRU to take initiatives for grievance addressal of PWDs. To ensure a fair and transparent resolution of grievances, CPDI recommends the following actions:

#### Order After Affording Opportunity of Hearing:

DSRU should establish a formal grievance redressal mechanism that allows persons with disabilities to seek resolution through an order after being afforded the opportunity of a hearing. It should ensure a fair and transparent process that upholds the principles of justice.

#### Timely Resolution:

DWRU should prioritize the timely resolution of grievances to prevent prolonged challenges for persons with disabilities. Therefore, it should establish clear timelines for addressing complaints and ensure that the redressal mechanism operates efficiently.



### Facilitation and Guidance of Persons with Disabilities for Job Application:

Section 24 of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 entrusts the DWRU important task of facilitating and guiding PWDs in job application.

It is important to understand that persons with disabilities (PWDs), like individuals without disabilities, have strengths that enable them to excel in certain areas. Simultaneously, there are highly educated PWDs who can serve as role models for others. Therefore, DWRU should develop linkages for PWDs with successfully employed counterparts to enhance their skills in the job-hunting process.

DWRU should also conduct job fairs to provide PWDs with networking opportunities.

### provision of financial assistance to persons with disabilities from the Fund:

Section 24 of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 empowers the DWRU to take steps for the provision of financial assistance to PWDs from the fund.

To enhance the provision of financial assistance to persons with disabilities, CPDI recommends that DWRU undertake the following measures:

#### Simplifying Application Processes:

DWRU should work towards simplifying the application processes for accessing financial assistance from the dedicated fund. This involves creating user-friendly application forms and providing assistance to individuals with disabilities in completing the necessary documentation.

#### Needs Assessment Mechanism:

DWRU should establish a structured process for evaluating the financial requirements of individuals with disabilities, ensuring that the allocated funds cater specifically to their diverse needs.

#### Transparent Allocation Criteria:

CPDI emphasizes the importance of transparent allocation criteria. DWRU should define clear and objective parameters for determining eligibility, taking into account the varying degrees and types of disabilities. This ensures an equitable distribution of financial assistance.

### arranging for adult literacy with the collaboration of Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department of the Government and NGOs:

Section 24 of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 requires the DWRU to take steps for the adult literacy of the PWDs. For arranging adult literacy with the collaboration of the Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department of the Government and NGOs, CPDI recommends that DWRU takes the following steps:

#### Strategic Partnerships:

DWRU should establish partnerships with the Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department of the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Collaborative efforts will facilitate the development and implementation of tailored adult literacy programs for persons with disabilities.

#### Customized Literacy Programs:

As the needs of persons with disabilities (PWDs) are characterized by the nature of their different disabilities, DWRU should work closely with educational experts and disability advocates to design and implement literacy programs that are specifically tailored to the diverse needs and learning styles of individuals with disabilities.

#### Accessible Learning Materials:

DWRU should ensure the availability of accessible learning materials, including alternative formats such as Braille, large print, and audio formats. This step is vital to accommodate various disabilities and enhance the inclusivity of the literacy programs.

**preparation of monthly progress reports and their submission to the Council:**

Section 24 of the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022 requires the DWRU to prepare monthly progress reports to be submitted to the Council. For the effective preparation and submission of monthly progress reports, CPDI recommends the following actions by the District Welfare and Rehabilitation Unit (DWRU):

**Establishing Reporting Protocols:**

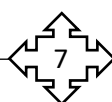
DWRU should establish clear protocols for gathering data and information necessary for monthly progress reports. Standardized reporting formats will ensure consistency and ease of data collection.

**Timely Data Compilation:**

DWRU should give priority to timely data compilation to capture the most recent and relevant information. This will enable the preparation of accurate and up-to-date progress reports that reflect the activities of DWRU.

**Comprehensive Overview:**

DWRU should ensure that the monthly progress reports provide a comprehensive overview of the unit's activities, achievements, challenges faced, and future plans. This holistic approach will offer valuable insights to the Council for effective decision-making.



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