



An Inclusion Technical Assistance Publication



Lessons learned

From project

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## Success Story: Michelin's Inclusion Journey to Become a Disability Inclusive Employer

Based on the Disability Inclusion Programme at Michelin's Chennai Site (UCH) in India

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## About HI's Inclusion Technical Assistance

### “Advising you on your inclusion journey”

Humanity & Inclusion's expertise on the inclusion of persons with disabilities dates back to 1982. Through our Inclusion Technical Assistance (ITA), we make this expertise available to actors interested in improving the inclusion of persons with disabilities among their project participants, users and employees. From the initial inclusion assessment to long-term coaching, we advise NGOs, donors, multinational companies and governments on the sustainable inclusion of persons with disabilities.

More information on [hi.org/ita](https://hi.org/ita) or by writing to [ita@hi.org](mailto:ita@hi.org).

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## Foreword

Dear friends,

Successful businesses recognize the inclusion of people with disabilities positively impacts the bottom line.

There are more than one billion people worldwide – around 15% of the population – living with a disability. Out of which, around 800 million are of working age. This represents a rich, untapped talent pool that businesses can't afford to ignore. Evidence indicates that employing people with disabilities can lead to higher profitability, increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, increased innovation, positive organizational culture, enhanced reputation and improved customer retention.

Fostering a genuinely inclusive workplace where each employee is valued and respected requires concerted and meaningful action from businesses. Many business leaders understand the strategic imperative of disability inclusion and are committed level the playing field for people with disabilities. But they may not know where to start. That's where Humanity & Inclusion can help.

Michelin, one of the leading manufacturers of tyres with a presence in 170 countries, recognizes the values of the unique talents and skills of people with disabilities and draws strengths from differences. Striving for a culture of inclusion of people with disabilities not only brings tangible economic benefits, Michelin believes that it is the right thing to do – all businesses have a shared and collective responsibility to create an environment where people with disabilities are respected and treated equally for an inclusive and better society.

Strengthening its commitment towards disability inclusion, Michelin collaborated with Humanity & Inclusion, a disability inclusion expertise organisation that helps businesses to





employ people with disabilities and transform the workplace to be disability-inclusive in one of the manufacturing sites in Chennai. Humanity & Inclusion was engaged to provide strategic advisory services on inclusive employment practices.

The collaborative effort – strong commitment from Michelin combined with a wealth of professional and technical knowledge of Humanity & Inclusion on employing people with disabilities resulted in various initiatives and high-level commitments to support Michelin’s manufacturing site in Chennai to be more inviting and productive for current and future employees with disabilities.

Two years have passed since the partnership between Michelin and Humanity & Inclusion began. We have made good progress and want to share our key insights, and hope to inspire you to embark on a journey to be a disability-inclusive organization.

Best regards,

**Reiza Dejjito**  
Regional Director,  
India, Nepal and Sri Lanka  
Humanity & Inclusion

**B. Ranganathan**  
Plant Director, Chennai  
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Chennai, India



## Introduction

The narrative arc of disability and inclusion in business is shifting. Growing evidence reveals the changing mindsets and priorities of the business community – companies, across the globe, have taken steps to gain a deeper understanding of what inclusion means for people with disabilities. There has been concerted efforts to drive progress forward to create inclusive and equitable work environments.

Disability and inclusion impact every single aspect of business operations. Many organisations have begun to

acknowledge that employing people with disabilities is integral to the sustainability agenda, opens up a rich talent pool, plays a key role in the diversity of thought, stronger morale, improved productivity, increased innovation, inclusive work culture, better decision-making and positive returns to the bottom-line.

Change is happening. There are some encouraging signs that businesses are changing their policies and practices to become more inclusive of persons with disabilities, but a long way to go.



## Part 1: The changing arc of people with disabilities at work

### What is disability?

Defining disability is complicated as it is 'complex, dynamic, multidimensional and contested'<sup>i</sup>. Disability can happen at any stage of one's life. It can be either permanent or temporary, visible or invisible and affect participation in society to different degrees. A physical disability can be visibly apparent (e.g. a person who uses a wheelchair) or an invisible disability that is less noticeable from direct observation (e.g. a person who is hard of hearing).

recognises that 'disability is an evolving concept'.

'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD)<sup>ii</sup>

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD)

<sup>i</sup> 2011. World Report on Disability 2011, World Health Organisation.  
<sup>ii</sup> 2006. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, United Nations.



## A rich, deep and untapped talent pool

There are more than one billion people worldwide – around 15% of the population – living with a disability. One-fifth of the estimated global total, or between 110 million and 190 million people experience significant disabilities<sup>iii</sup>. It shows that there is a strong likelihood that most of us know at least one person with a disability. They could be our family, friends, neighbours or colleagues.

Worldwide around 800 million people with disabilities are of working age<sup>iv</sup>. But their full and meaningful participation in the labour market is significantly low, and most of them are shut out of the job market. It is also noted that people with disabilities are more likely to be employed part-time or in vulnerable environments than those without disabilities.

In India, persons with disabilities constitute 2.2% of the population – around 21.9 million people<sup>v</sup> – and their employment needs remain unmet. The actual numbers are contested because of old data and the World Bank suggests that there are 80 million persons with disabilities in India<sup>vi</sup>. This represents a huge pool of rich, deep and untapped talent that businesses can't afford to ignore.

The disability employment gap is vast across the globe. In the UK, people with disabilities were over a third less likely to be employed than persons without disabilities, with an employment rate of 53.2% compared with 81.8% for persons without disabilities<sup>vii</sup>. While in India, only 36% of the total persons with disabilities are employed, with 47% are male with disabilities and 23% are women with disabilities<sup>viii</sup>.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic had a knock-on effect for changing the rhetoric around disability and inclusion, and also made work more accessible for people with disabilities, it has simultaneously exacerbated the employment gap. Persons with disabilities are hard hit by layoffs and a recent study found that 57% of people with disabilities had faced a financial crisis in India<sup>ix</sup>. The problem is not unique to India. In the United States, 1 in 5 workers with disabilities has lost their jobs, compared with 1 in 7 in the general population during the pandemic<sup>x</sup>.

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<sup>iii</sup> 2011. World Report on Disability 2011, World Health Organisation.

<sup>iv</sup> 2015. ILO and disability inclusion, International Labour Organisation.

<sup>v</sup> 2016. Disabled Persons in India, A statistical profile 2016, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.

<sup>vi</sup> 2009. People with disabilities in India: From commitments to outcomes, The World Bank.

<sup>vii</sup> 2019. Disability and employment, UK: 2019, Office for National Statistics.

<sup>viii</sup> 2016. Disabled Persons in India, A statistical profile 2016, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India

<sup>ix</sup> 2021. Locked Down and Left Behind, A report on the status of persons with disabilities in India during the COVID-19 crisis, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled.

<sup>x</sup> 2020. U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics.

# 15%

of the global population lives with a disability – that's over 1 billion people.

# 110-190 million

people experience significant form of disabilities.

# 800 million

people with disabilities are of working age.

# 2.2%

of the population in India lives with a disability – that's over 21.9 million people.

# 36%

of people with disabilities are employed in India.

# 53%

of people with disabilities in India faced financial difficulties during COVID-19.



## Barriers to employment for people with disabilities

People with disabilities face a multitude of barriers that impact their employment. These barriers can make it extremely difficult or even impossible for people with disabilities to complete tasks independently. The World Health Organisation defines barriers as more than just physical obstacles.

People with disabilities face challenges while seeking employment as well as during employment that are a product of the environmental barriers outlined above: low literacy levels, lack of access to information on job opportunities and relevant technological skills, societal

prejudice, ineffective redress mechanisms, inadequate workplace accessibility, inappropriate assignments, negative attitudes and lack of communication facilities<sup>xi</sup>.

Employers generally have limited awareness about talented workforce of people with disabilities, fear of high employee insurance costs, a stereotypical and biased mindset that people with disabilities lack necessary knowledge and skills, concerns about negative attitudes of other employees and limited or no investment to workforce adjustments.

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<sup>xi</sup> 2019. Moving beyond compliance. Inclusion of persons with disabilities in business, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People and Oxfam India.

“There are multiple factors in a person’s environment that, through their absence or presence limit functioning and create disability. These include:

- inaccessible physical environment
- lack of assistive technology
- negative attitudes of people towards disability
- services, systems and policies that are either non-existent or that hinder the involvement of all people with a health condition.”

World Health Organisation (WHO)<sup>1</sup>

## The legal framework in India

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD) gives effect to the principles of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which was signed and ratified by India on 1 October 2007.

The RPwD act is a primary piece of legislation governing rights of people with disabilities in India. The Act stresses non-discrimination and recognises 21 categories of disabilities. It focused on transforming the meaning of disability, expanding its definition from the existing medical framework to a social one. Notably, the Act applies to all foreign companies that have a presence in India.

The act underlines the need to make private companies responsible for creating an inclusive work environment for employees with disabilities. With the enactment of the RPwD act, private employers shall be required to:

- Frame an Equal Opportunity Policy.
- Appoint a liaison officer to lead the recruitment of persons with disabilities and to provide accommodations as requested and/or required.
- Identify posts or vacancies for persons with disabilities.
- The head of the establishment shall ensure that no person with

disability is discriminated against because of his/her disability.

- Provide additional facilities to persons with disabilities such as training facilities, assistive devices and a universally accessible work environment.
- Formulate additional benefits such as preference in job location transfer and special leave.
- Revamp existing hiring practices and HR policies.
- Follow accessibility standards, ensuring that the building structure and the physical environment, transport and information and communication technology adhere to the accessibility norm.
- All companies, having 20 or more employees shall maintain records containing details of the employees with disabilities.<sup>xii</sup>

The well-laid legal framework is one of the most powerful vehicles of change, progress and development for people with disabilities. While the international instruments remain pivotal in promoting the rights of people with disabilities, domestic legislation is the most effective means for facilitating social change, improve opportunities at the workplace and achieving an increased understanding of concepts relating to disability at all levels of society.

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<sup>xii</sup> 2016. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Legislative Department, the Government of India.

## Part 2: Moving from 'doing good' to 'good for business'

### Good for business

“My team members are very supportive and encouraging. I am extremely happy to be a part of the team. Michelin’s work environment is amazing and safety precautions are top-notch. As Michelin’s tagline goes, Michelin has provided a better way forward for me.”

Vijayakumar, Verification Operator, Michelin’s Chennai site

Becoming a truly disability-confident organisation requires courage and commitment. Many leading companies, like Michelin, have firmly placed disability inclusion on their business agenda. They have chosen to fundamentally change their way of thinking, acting and being when employing people with disabilities. It presents a unique opportunity for business leaders to capitalise on the enormous economic and creative potential of the largest ‘diversity’ segment of the workforce – people with disabilities.

### Disability inclusion drives success and improves bottomline

Independent studies provide evidence that people with disabilities have a very positive work attitude and work ethos.

There is a clear link between the company’s disability inclusion efforts and its financial performance. Companies that offered the most inclusive working environment for disabled employees achieved an average of 28% higher revenue, twice the net income and 30% higher economic profit margins than their

industry peers. It also revealed that companies that accelerated their inclusion efforts for persons with disabilities over time were more likely to report higher shareholder returns than their peer group<sup>xiii</sup>.

Employing persons with disabilities can lead to:



Higher profitability



Increased productivity



Reduced absenteeism



Increased innovation



Positive organizational culture



Enhanced reputation



Improved customer retention

The American company Walgreens, one of the largest drugstore chains in the country reported that their distribution centre in which more than 30% of the 800 employees self-identify as persons with disabilities reported 20% more efficiency than comparable facilities without workers with disabilities. It also stated that people with disabilities perform equally to people without disabilities in productivity rate, accuracy and safety incident reports<sup>xiv</sup>. In addition, employee turnover was half that of other employees, and people with disabilities had third fewer incidents than their colleagues without disabilities<sup>xv</sup>.

People with intellectual disabilities' brains process information in a different way that can be a terrific asset to the business community. Individuals with Autism are hyper-focused and highly analytic thinkers<sup>xvi</sup> with exceptional proficiency in technology. They have a high tolerance of repetition and routine and are a great solution for scarce talent in the areas of artificial intelligence, data science and other information technology areas. Companies like Ernst & Young, Microsoft,

Dell Technologies and other companies rely on people with autism strengths for AI jobs<sup>xvii</sup>. All opportunities must be opened to persons with disabilities and they need to be hired based on their skills, abilities and competencies.

People with disabilities, along with family and friends represent USD 13 trillion<sup>xviii</sup> of disposable income across the world. Businesses can no longer afford to exclude such a huge market share. It is time to change the perception and shift the mindset to thinking about what people with disabilities can do instead of what they cannot do – and the benefits are enormous.

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<sup>xiii</sup> 2018. Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage, Accenture, Disability:IN and American Association of People with Disabilities.

<sup>xiv</sup> 2012. Kaletta, J., Binks, D. and Robinson, R. Creating an Inclusive Workplace: Integrating employees with disabilities into a distribution center environment.

<sup>xv</sup> 2021. Aichner, T. The economic argument for hiring people with disabilities, *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 8.

<sup>xvi</sup> 2018. Donnelly, M., Wong, P., Neck, P., and Boyd, W. Positive autism: Investigation of workplace characteristics leading to a strengths-based approach to employment of people with autism. *Review of International Comparative Management*.

<sup>xvii</sup> 2019. Murawski, J. People with autism are hot hires for artificial intelligence jobs. *Business Standard*.

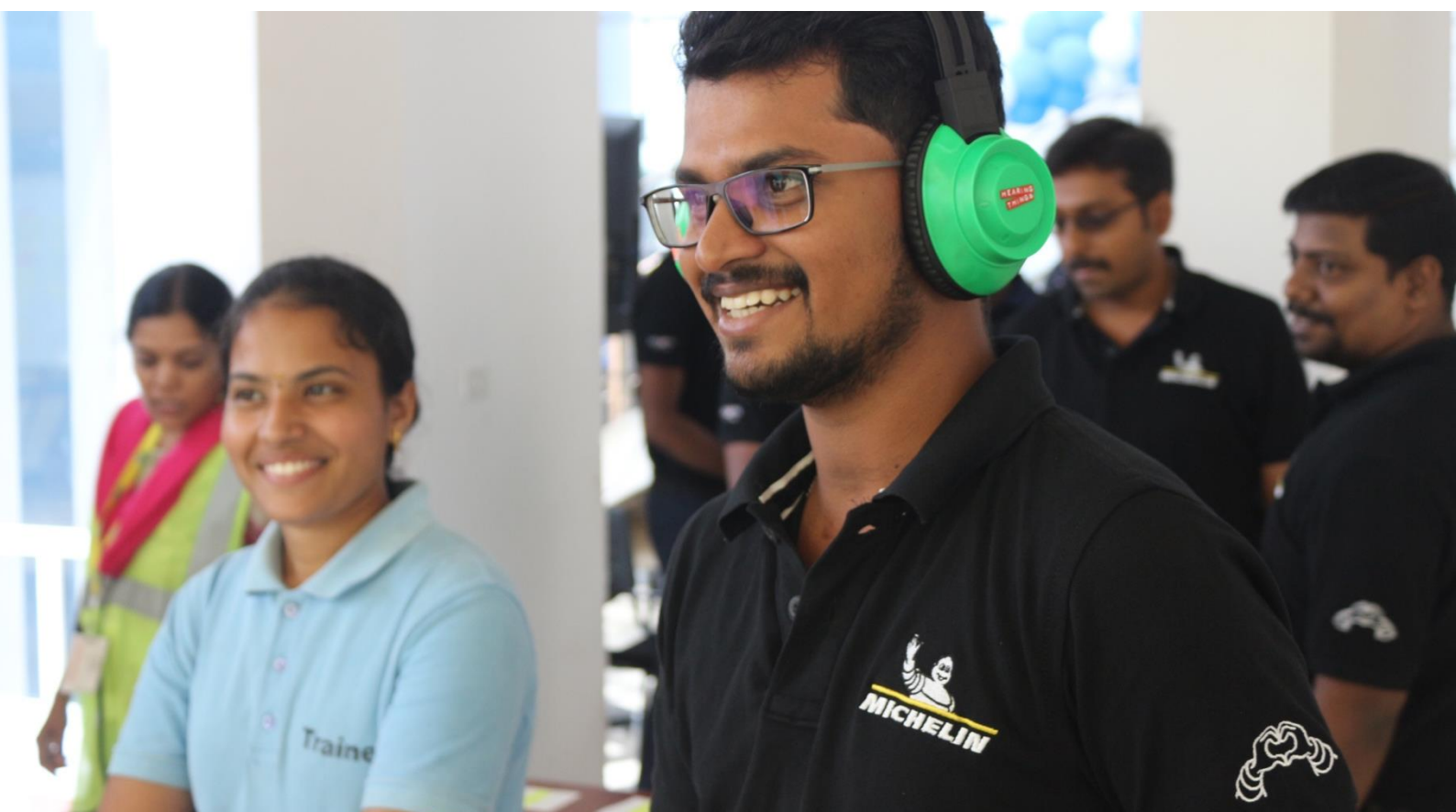
<sup>xviii</sup> 2020. Annual Report: The Global Economics of Disability. *Return on Disability*.





## How can your business tap into this huge talent pool?

- Begin by forging partnerships with specialized organizations on disability and employment, Organizations such as Humanity & Inclusion can help businesses to gain the necessary technical expertise to become a disability-confident organisation.
- Conduct a comprehensive internal assessment to understand the company's current levels of disability inclusion across policies, employment practices, the work environment, and more.
- Review policies to determine barriers for people with disabilities in employment practices. Write an equal opportunity policy that provides a well-defined set of do's and don'ts and respect the employees with disabilities in the work environment.
- Make sure that job advertisements are accessible to people with disabilities, and ensure that the shortlist of candidates includes people with disabilities.
- Factor disability inclusion into physical workspace design and make the workspace accessible for people with disabilities.
- Sensitise, educate and train employees and leadership to create an accessible and inclusive work environment.
- Provide reasonable accommodations to enable people with disabilities to enjoy equal employment opportunities.
- Set aside a reasonable budget to operationalize the actions above.



## Part 3: Michelin's manufacturing site in Chennai leads the way in getting disability inclusion right

"Michelin sees diversity as a human imperative and a key contributor to Company's performance. My absolute priority is to provide a safe and fulfilling work environment for all Michelin employees. I want to ensure their daily work experience is aligned with our Purpose and our core value of Respecting People."

Florent Menegaux, Group Michelin CEO

### Michelin accelerates its approach towards diversity and inclusion

Creating an equal opportunity for all has been a driving force behind Michelin's diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts. D&I is well witnessed within its business operations, supply chain, partnerships and beyond. With the 'Michelin in Motion' strategic plan, the company has set the ambition to take the momentum and embarks further – accelerating to strike a balance between human, environmental and economic priorities. The word 'Human' truly represents that each individual is treated with respect, dignity and fairness.

Michelin recognises the value of the unique talents and skills of individuals of all abilities and believes that success depends on the development and fulfilment of employees, regardless of their nationality, gender, religion or disability. Embracing a diverse workforce and drawing strengths from differences, Michelin unlocks an inclusive space where people are actively listened to, speak fearlessly, express fully, grow confidently and work collaboratively to build the future of Michelin.

"Michelin is a place where respect is fundamental and heartfelt. Individuals feel included when they perceive their unique identity is respected, acknowledged and appreciated as valuable. At Chennai, we have strengthened our commitment to create a trusting inclusive environment for people with disabilities – every employee with a disability is welcomed, feels comfortable, respected and empowered to realise their full potential."

B. Ranganathan, Plant Director, Michelin's site in Chennai, India

Michelin's longstanding support for people with disabilities started in June 2019 and today, it reflects in the corporate purpose statement 'Offering everyone a better way forward'. The company continues its efforts towards the integration, inclusion and development of people with disabilities at workplaces,

enabling every individual to bring the true, authentic and fullest selves to work. From creativity in design to accessible workplaces and disability-friendly recruitment strategies, Michelin strives to achieve a better understanding of human needs and shape the future of mobility in many forms.

### Michelin's move towards disability-inclusion includes the following actions:

- Promote employment of a widely untapped pool of talent;
- Challenge widely held misconceptions about the abilities and skills of people with disabilities;
- Ensure people with disabilities have equal access to all opportunities.



Grounded in a combination of behavioural theories, evidence and practical experience, Humanity & Inclusion's approach to disability and inclusion is holistic. The model consists of five dimensions, which together, shape a disability-inclusive workplace. All dimensions are closely interlinked.

The five dimensions are:



**Inclusive Policy and Leadership**



**Human Resources and Management Practices**



**Internal Culture**



**Accessibility**



**Tailored Partnerships**

### **Dimension 1: Inclusive Policy and Leadership**

Meaningful actions from leaders, along with disability-inclusive policies unlock the potential of employees with disabilities, enhance the collective power of teams and bring the organisation closer to the aspiration of being disability-inclusive - the degree to which employees are embraced and enabled to make meaningful contributions. For inclusive policies to trickle down to everyone in the organisation, leaders need to adopt practices that are inclusive for people with disabilities, implement structural changes,

champion affinity groups, act as role models and ensure the involvement of people with disabilities in the decision-making process.

### **Dimension 2: Human Resources and Management Practices**

Ensuring fair and progressive human resources and management practices for people with disabilities is a strong step towards becoming a disability-inclusive organisation. The talent acquisition strategies, from talent attraction, recruitment and selection, development and career progression, performance management processes, along with developing an inclusive onboarding process where accommodations and establishing regular feedback mechanisms are essential to support and integrate employees with disabilities.

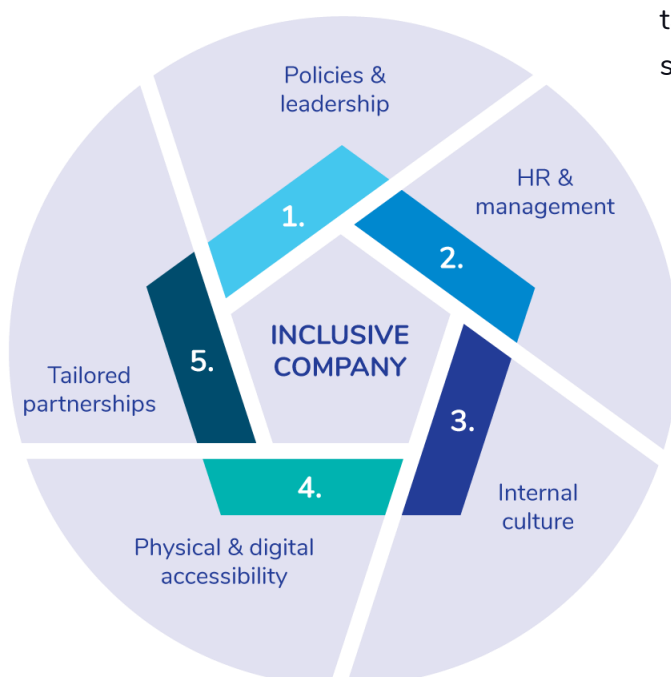
### **Dimension 3: Internal Culture**

Internal culture is the differentiator that determines the spoken and unspoken rules of engagement for how employees interact with employees with disabilities, and fuel each other's potential to thrive. When leaders facilitate meaningful dialogue about creating a more enabling environment for people with disabilities, and employees across the company are trained in respectful, inclusive practices, it increases the likelihood that all employees consistently acknowledge and exhibit those behaviours in day-to-day work. Sensitisation and etiquette around people with disabilities should be at the core of

the workplace training – from dispelling stereotypes to removing barriers and equipping employees to work alongside people with disabilities.

#### Dimension 4: Accessibility Audit

Accessibility includes physical or environmental accessibility such as wheelchair ramps, braille signage, accessible washrooms, as well as communication and digital accessibility, where information and communication technology is accessible to all. It is important to make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers that prevent people with disabilities from succeeding in their roles – it could be temporary or permanent, and are designed to optimise a work process, procedure or environment.



#### Dimension 5: Tailored partnerships

Businesses don't need to do it alone. NGOs like Humanity & Inclusion can bring a wealth of professional and technical knowledge to provide advice on employment practices to successfully transform the workplace and workforce to be disability-inclusive. The partnerships can serve as a vehicle to mobilise and share expertise, and strengthen the overall approach of implementation with various dimensions factored in. For example, in the partnership with Michelin, HI has supported with a tailored approach, inclusive recruitment processes, skills development for employees, advice on constructing an accessible work environment and mentoring. In addition to it, HI helps in facilitating the partnerships with accessibility audit, reasonable accommodation, local sourcing organisations focused on improving the employment opportunities of people with disabilities and various consultants such as sign language interpreters, inspirational talk experts and companies that sell screen readers.

## Michelin manufacturing site in Chennai joins forces with Humanity & Inclusion India Programme

Strengthening its commitment to disability inclusion, the Michelin Corporate Foundation partnered with Humanity & Inclusion a disability inclusion expertise organisation that helps businesses, corporations and entrepreneurs to employ people with disabilities and transform the workplace and workforce to be disability-inclusive. Humanity & Inclusion brings the latest thinking and frameworks to enable businesses to provide a fully inclusive employment experience for people with disabilities at a global level and harness the potential of the largely untapped talent pool in the diversity sphere.

As part of the pilot project, the Michelin Corporate Foundation signed a project with Humanity & Inclusion to bring life into its commitment to disability and inclusion, and build a business where people with disabilities feel warmly welcomed, respected and included. The project took place at one of Michelin's manufacturing sites in Chennai, India. HI, as a technical assistance expert, was engaged to provide strategic advisory services on best practices on inclusive employment; and to support Michelin India to make workplaces more inviting and productive for current and future employees with disabilities, and above all, develop their potential. HI's technical assistance is informed by more than 30 years of knowledge and involvement with

private and public sector companies across 20 countries.

### Facts about Michelin's manufacturing plant in Chennai

- **Size:** 290 acres
- **No. of employees:** 900
- **Location:** Chennai, India
- **Nature of work:** Production of radial tires for buses and trucks

The project's approach was built on a thorough assessment and subsequent development of an inclusive improvement plan by Michelin leadership in partnership with HI. The project focused on deepening and consolidating methodologies and practical tools, to transform Michelin India's workplaces to be more accessible and inclusive. Practices were evidence based, rooted in lessons learned from previous projects implemented by HI, and contextualized through adaptations made possible through strategic monitoring, formalization of good practices and ongoing research. The project was rolled-out in three phases across five dimensions of inclusion identified by HI as core to inclusive workplaces:

### **Phase 1: A disability-inclusive assessment and formulation of an inclusion improvement plan**

Rooted in a detailed disability inclusion criteria across the five dimensions of inclusion, the assessment tool helps to identify strengths and opportunities for change in terms of making Michelin's Chennai site more disability-inclusive and develop an inclusion improvement plan to address the gaps.

### **Phase 2: Sensitisation and awareness-raising initiatives**

Equip, engage and empower employees with knowledge and skills to interact with

people with disabilities, and to alter mindsets, address fears, and break stereotypes around issues related to people with disabilities, especially employment.

### **Phase 3: Strategic advisory services and coaching**

Advise the leadership, Human Resources, People's Managers, Engineers and Facility Management on best practices and initiatives that enable a culture of disability inclusion, including accessible workspaces, recruitment strategies, employment, retention and advancement and accommodation.



## Findings and action plans for a disability-inclusive workplace at Michelin

### Phase 1: A disability-inclusive assessment and formulation of an inclusion improvement plan

Under the joint leadership of Michelin and led an extensive Disability Inclusion assessment to evaluate the current approaches and practices of an inclusive work environment for people with disabilities at Michelin's manufacturing plant in Chennai.

Building on the five-dimensions approach, the Disability Inclusion assessment aimed to examine and explore:

- The internal policies and strategies on diversity and inclusion
- The knowledge and attitudes of employees on disability and employment of people with disabilities
- Physical and communications accessibility for the entire site, including company transportation
- Practices of Human Resources and Management
- Inventory of needs with regards to disability and inclusion and how to match the services of the local actors specialised in disability inclusion

The assessment consisted of four primary data collection components and followed a mixed-methods approach to bring together representative statistics and contextual insights:

1. Document review
2. Online survey
3. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews
4. Accessibility audit

#### Document review

The assessment advisor of HI reviewed a wide array of relevant documents including strategies on diversity and inclusion, human resources policies and management approaches, and more to gain insight on the broad, overall picture of disability inclusion practices at Michelin. All documents were read thoroughly with a high level of objectivity and sensitivity to build contextual meaning.

#### Online survey

A total of 251 employees participated in the online survey to provide their views and thoughts on the current disability-inclusive work environment at Michelin. A stratified random sampling method was employed to gather the perspective of employees from all departments across the plant operations.



### Focus group discussions and interviews

Eight focus group discussions were conducted to understand the knowledge, attitudes and practices towards employees with disabilities. A total of 15 individual interviews were carried out with 100 representatives from the leadership team and employees, including two interviews with people with disabilities.

### Participatory accessibility audit

A detailed accessibility audit involved a comprehensive inspection and assessment of the building/physical

infrastructure and assistive communicative technologies at Michelin's plant against international accessibility standards to identify barriers as well as currently accessible infrastructure in design and functionality. The access audit was conducted by a local partner, v-shesh, who specialises in inclusion assessments, access audits and creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The accessibility audit team consisted of people with disabilities – a person with a vision loss, a person with a hearing loss, a person who uses wheelchair and a person with a physical impairment.



## Findings of the disability inclusive assessment

Key findings for each dimension that emerged from the baseline assessment included:

**Finding 1:** There was a strong will and commitment from the leadership team at Michelin's site in Chennai to create an enabling workplace for people with disabilities. Michelin's plant in Chennai adopted some good practices on disability inclusion while employing people with disabilities. It was evident that the organisation had not fully embraced all approaches across five dimensions due to limited capacities and resources. In particular, strong safety culture in the manufacturing plant considered employing people with disabilities could be a risk.

**Finding 2:** At the Group level of Michelin, diversity and inclusion strategies recognise the employment of people with disabilities as a strategic priority. But there was no policy at the factory level in Chennai. The Non-Discrimination policy did not talk about how disability inclusion can be put into practice. It has been identified that the recruitment and hiring processes were not inclusive for people with disabilities, and there was a limited knowledge about the understanding of people with disabilities. Efforts were needed to strengthen the meaningful participation and engagement of an employee with disabilities and actual practice on the ground.

**Finding 3:** Although Michelin had taken some steps to create an enabling work environment with a strong safety culture, 'respect for all' valued behaviour, an open-minded approach and didn't exclude people with disabilities through corporate social responsibility activities. There had been a commitment and a strong corporate drive to employ people with disabilities.

**Finding 4:** Leaders had taken concerted efforts to create a disability-inclusive work environment. Importantly leadership's commitment didn't automatically translate into practical changes to accessibility within the work environment - this was a longer-term process. . It was also evident that there was a limited knowledge on how to employ people with disabilities in the factory environment.

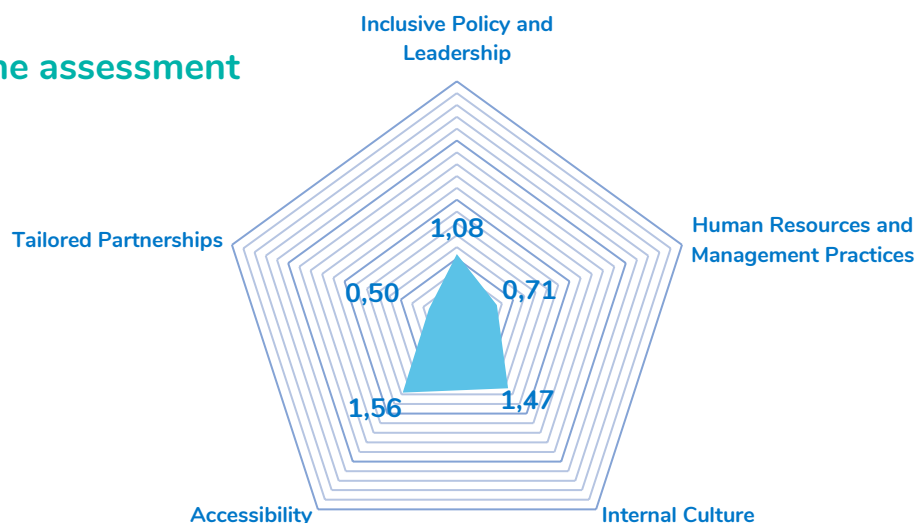
**Finding 5:** Survey responses, focus group discussions and individual interviews helped to listen to the voice of employees with disabilities. Results highlighted that there is limited awareness and perception gaps about people with disabilities, and working alongside them. There was a lack of practical guidance and lessons on how to address the barriers and ensure equal participation and meaningful engagement in the workplace. There were no specialised partners to provide guidance and practices.

## Development of an inclusive improvement plan

The Disability Inclusion Assessment provided valuable insights on areas for improvement across the five dimensions. After presenting the assessment findings, HI organized an action plan workshop with Michelin's team to summarise the findings and co-develop an Inclusion Improvement plan with Michelin representatives. The workshop captured the thoughts of 30 participants, consisting of top leadership and department managers at Michelin's site in Chennai.

Participants were asked to evaluate the inclusiveness of people with disabilities at Michelin's site. Then HI presented the findings of the inclusion assessment, which highlighted the perception gaps between what leaders of Michelin think and the current level of inclusion. There was a strong disconnect between perception and reality. The results were consolidated and the inclusiveness of people with disabilities stood at:

### Base line assessment



Michelin's Chennai site was assessed across five dimensions. Scoring is between 0 and 4, with the lowest possible score being 0 and the highest possible score is 4. The dimension on Inclusive Policy and Leadership stood at 1.08; in terms of HR and Management Practices, the score was 0.71; the Internal Culture dimension's score was 1.47; in the area of Accessibility, Michelin's baseline

assessment score was 1.56 and; the Tailored Partnership's score was 0.50.

Drawing parallels between HI's technical expertise and Michelin's realities, HI drew up Inclusion Improvement Plans (2IPs) that included 18 recommendations with 71 action points, timeline and responsible parties across the five dimensions.

## Enabling a disability-inclusive environment at Michelin's manufacturing site in Chennai, India

### Phase 2: Sensitisation and awareness-raising initiatives

With the Inclusion Improvement Plan in place, the project moved to the next phase, which aimed to influence the way Michelin employees think and to bring behavioural change amongst employees at Michelin's plant in Chennai. Sensitisation program strategies were built across the five dimensions to improve the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of employees about people with disabilities.

In phase 2, HI provided  
**1450 human hours**  
of sensitisation and  
awareness raising  
programmes for leaders  
and employees.



#### Inclusive Policy and Leadership

**30 leaders** attended the thought-provoking disability inclusion training sessions, which was conducted to equip executive leaders at Michelin's plant to act as role models. It strengthened leaders' knowledge and understanding of disability inclusion, as well as laws in India and at the international level. The training

explained the strategic benefit of employing persons with disabilities, from accomplishing diversity and inclusion goals to supporting the overarching vision of Michelin.



#### Human Resources & Management Practices

**25 HR specialists**, Learning and Development team, supervisors and managers were trained to enhance the understanding of reasonable accommodation practices to prevent discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

#### What is sign language?

Sign language is a visual way of communicating where someone uses hand gestures and movements, body language and facial expressions to communicate.

**15 employees** attended customised sign language training to support inclusive recruitment practices and build employees' confidence in communicating with colleagues and customers with disabilities. (While exposure to sign

language increases the culture of inclusion, it is important to remember that this cannot replace the presence of a sign language interpreter, e.g. for job candidates who speak Indian sign language.)



### Internal culture

**10 tailored** awareness sessions were organised for employees at Michelin's plant in Chennai. The sessions were aimed to provide an overview of disability, disability etiquette and covered how to communicate, engage and interact with employees and customers with disabilities. Trainings were facilitated using a structured step-by-step approach – knowledge, guidance, tools and actionable steps – that supported employees to become disability inclusion champions.

**10 webinars,** talks shows and inspirational sessions were organized to encourage employees to look beyond the disability, understand the uniqueness and perspectives people with disabilities bring to the table, and the importance of providing opportunities for advancement and success in their personal and professional sphere.



### Accessibility

**100 employees** from Engineering, Facility Management and HR were trained on guidelines, recommendations and

design standards on universally accessible workplaces employees and visitors with disabilities. These trainings helped to increase awareness and knowledge about accessibility requirements and emphasised the importance of removing barriers in the physical environment, as well as communication practices.



### Tailored Partnerships

**60 job seekers** with disabilities visited Michelin's stall in a job fair, organised by Ability Foundation, a national cross ability organisation for the empowerment and mainstreaming of people with disabilities. In an effort to support job seekers with disabilities and gain meaningful employment opportunities at Michelin's manufacturing unit in Chennai, HI and v-shesh supported Michelin to understand the skills what people with disabilities can bring to the organisation.

The event provided a platform for people with disabilities to interact with the hiring managers of Michelin and learn more about working in the manufacturing plant. It was an important step towards inclusion for people with disabilities at Michelin. In addition to this, HI facilitated tailored partnerships with individual experts and service providers for availing accessibility services, v-shesh and Youth for Jobs for sourcing candidates with disabilities and Enable India supported in organizing sensitisation and awareness programmes in India.

## Empowering people with disabilities and championing inclusivity

### Phase 3: Strategic advisory services and coaching



#### Inclusive Policy and Leadership

For disability inclusion to be right, it has to be driven from the top. Strong leadership commitment and engagement towards disability inclusion sends a consistent message across the organisation that disability and inclusion are critical to the success of the company. Though all leaders at Michelin wanted to do the right thing, they had a limited understanding of disability and inclusion, and the concepts of disability and inclusion weren't fully understood across the organisation. HI's expertise helped them to understand the business imperative of disability and inclusion, which was tightly tied to the social and economic issues at the societal level and the core business strategy of the organisation.

Michelin, with the support of HI, drafted an Equal Opportunity Policy in accordance with the Indian laws to ensure that the work environment was free from any discrimination, harassment and victimisation against persons with disabilities. Michelin created and disseminated a video from B. Ranganathan, Director of Michelin's site in

Chennai, in which he spoke about Michelin's plant commitment to disability inclusion. The video was published on the company's intranet. It received a huge positive response and helped strengthen the culture of inclusion for people with disabilities by demonstrating a strong commitment from company leadership.



#### Human Resources & Management Practices

Human Resources plays a crucial role in the transformation of the workplace to disability-inclusive. HR leaders' commitment to hiring people with disabilities goes beyond and enabling them at workplace – from overall process of talent management to transforming the conventional perspectives towards recruiting people with disabilities and adopt practices to help them achieve full potential.

Michelin reviewed and revised the way the company drafts job postings. As a result, the company's job descriptions are more accessible and inclusive, encouraging job seekers with disabilities to apply for potential roles at Michelin and supported the hiring managers to select the most qualified people for the effective performance of business operations.

A sign language dictionary along with their visual representation was launched to bridge the communication gap between employees with hearing loss/hard of hearing and employees without disabilities. It helped to improve freedom of expression and strengthen the bonds in the work environment.

Strategies were redefined to ensure non-discriminatory and flexible HR policies and processes, such as creating systems to provide reasonable accommodation, inclusive career development systems, and retention process to recruit and retain people with disabilities. Inclusive systems foster a culture of inclusion and an enhanced capacity to appreciate the value that people with disabilities bring into the organisation.

To try to increase the talent pipeline of job seekers with disabilities into the Michelin's manufacturing site, the company created an apprenticeship program for people with disabilities in early 2021. Since the launch of the programme, 7 persons recruited and are undergoing training at the site in Chennai. This programme helped Michelin to gauge potential and appoint multiple qualified individuals as full-time employees.



Shifting culture may be the most difficult dimension to address across the five dimensions, but also arguably the most

important. In collaboration with HI's technical experts, Michelin created multiple initiatives to promote a shift toward a culture of inclusion.

One of these initiatives named the "Wall of Inclusion." The Wall of Inclusion was located at the entrance to the Michelin plant in Chennai, and highlighted the company's commitment to a common goal to collectively promote an inclusive workplace for people with disabilities. The Wall provided written and media information for all employees about the different phases of the disability inclusion journey and reiterate the accountability standards. The wall was periodically updated to reflect the current actions implemented by the company.

To complement this centralized source of information, many communication pieces were published on internal communication channels to break stereotypical thinking and change the mindset towards people with disabilities amongst employees. The intranet was regularly updated with relevant information material, including articles on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, success stories, leadership blogs, informational messages and visual displays such as standees and banners. Sensitisation videos were continuously displayed on the internal TV screens of Michelin.

Aiming to strengthen social participation and inclusion of people with disabilities, Inclusion Marathon was organised in which two employees with disabilities, 600 employees without disabilities, 30 people with disabilities who are interested in sports and 100 students from neighbourhood schools competed against each other. The event showing the true spirit of sportsmanship and inclusiveness, strengthening bonds between employees outside of a traditional work environment.

Michelin India celebrated The International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2019 and 2020, aiming to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in education, employment and in all spheres of society and development. Acknowledging this day helped employees to understand that Michelin walks the talk towards an inclusive and accessible work environment.



## Accessibility

Creating accessibility in workplaces is an important component to be a disability-inclusive organisation. It includes physical accessibility such as wheelchair ramps and accessible restrooms, and digital accessibility where information and communication technology is accessible to all/or compatible with assistive technology devices. Based on the findings from the accessibility audit at Michelin's

Chennai site, HI has implemented various measures to increase workplace accessibility for people with disabilities at Michelin's site in Chennai. For example:

the gate at the main entrance was changed from manual to automatic. It now automatically opens when an employee swipes their ID card at the entrance, increasing accessibility for the employee with disabilities but also ultimately the entire staff.

In an effort to provide accessible pathways for people with disabilities, ramps were built and pathways were stretched wide enough to easily accommodate employees who use a wheelchair. Pathways from emergency exits to safe assembly points were levelled to ensure accessibility.

Toilets were remodelled to be 'accessible', enabling employees with disabilities to gain prompt access to facilities different from regular toilets in terms of the available space, layout, equipment, flooring and lighting – removing all barriers and restrictions that might be present in regular toilets.

These are just some of the examples of the adaptations made to adapt the workplace to be more accessible and inclusive for employees with disabilities.





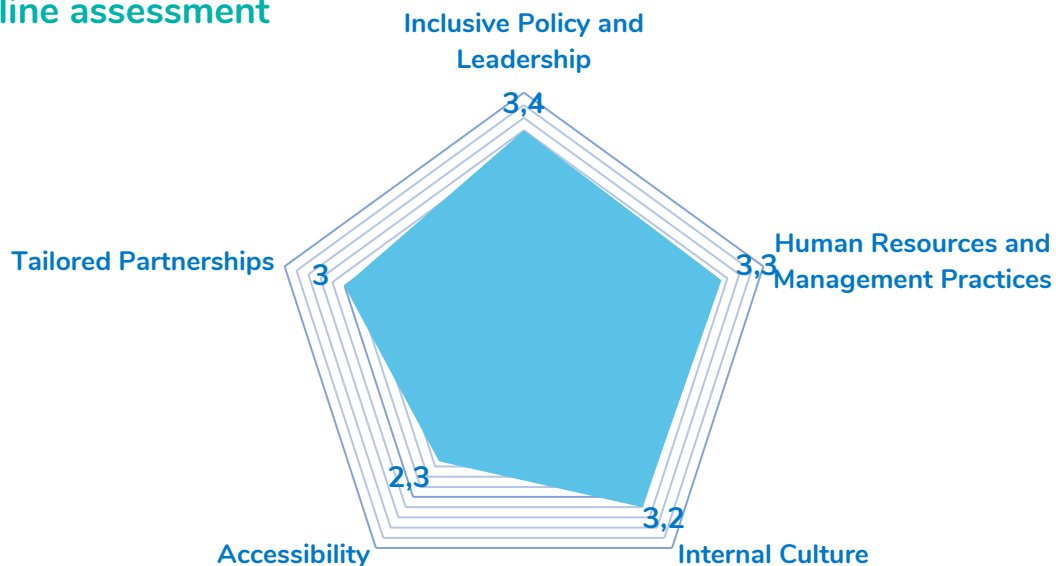
## Tailored Partnerships

Recognising that meaningful engagement with organisations of people with disabilities and experts across the disability spectrum is essential in the journey to be a disability-inclusive. Humanity & Inclusion mapped potential partners, who are experts in disability inclusion and supported Michelin India to establish trusted partnerships with localised specialised agencies to strengthen inclusive employment

practices and achieving real change. The signed partnerships include:

- V-shesh, who specialises in inclusion assessments, access audits and creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- Youth for jobs focuses on the education and employment of people with disabilities and
- Ability Foundation aims to empower and mainstream persons with disabilities.

## End line assessment



HI – India Programme’s representative was based at Michelin’s site for the entire duration of the project to provide strategic advisory and coaching, and ensure the smooth implementation of the project.

The final evaluation of the project, gathered through surveys from Michelin’s plant leadership showed a substantial increase in percentage across all five

dimensions of HI’s intervention model. The dimension on Inclusive Policy and Leadership scored 3.4 (from 1.08), HR and Management Practices stood at 3.3 (from 0.71), in terms of Internal Culture, the score was 3.2 (from 1.47), the Accessibility dimension score was 2.3 (from 1.56) and the Tailored Partnership’s endline assessment score was 3 (from 0.50).

## Business benefits from financial investment in inclusion

The inclusive budgeting approach echoes the strategic focus and is a strong indication of the company's commitment towards creating a disability-inclusive organisation. Michelin Corporate Foundation allotted EUR 192,920 to launch and support disability inclusive employment efforts at Michelin's manufacturing plant in Chennai.

At factory level, Michelin invested EUR 6,000 for modifications for accessible workspaces and various services, including sign language classes, job fairs and events. Humanity & Inclusion, comprising a team of highly skilled professionals of disability inclusion experts with rich technical knowledge to create inclusive and accessible workspaces was engaged to help. 26% of the budget covered administrative costs.

The most significant percentage (74%) of the overall budget was spent on:

- strategic planning and design to create a culture of disability inclusion that matches business objectives.
- strengthening the knowledge of leadership and employees with and without disabilities with trainings, sensitization and awareness programmes.
- offering technical and strategic expertise on making accessible environment including reasonable adjustments aligning to universal design, inclusive communication practices, reviewing policies, practices and strategies and launch new ones wherever needed disability inclusion celebrations.



**“I loved the sign language classes. It helped me to interact with my colleague who is hard of hearing. We became good friends even outside the plant”.**

Sivamanikandan Anandha-Durai, Training Department, Michelin’s site in Chennai

**“It’s all about realising the potential of all people, including people with disabilities. HI’s strategic advice supported us in attracting the best talent with disabilities and helping them be their best selves”.**

Jai Ganesh Devarajan, Training Manager,  
Michelin’s site in Chennai

**“Respect is a core of everything we do at Michelin. We believe disability inclusion is essential for organisations, which play a huge role in the uplifting of people with disabilities and can create rippling effect at the societal level. I am proud of the work we are doing. HI’s expertise and guidance has helped us to accelerate our agenda – we have set goals and continue to measure our progress.”**

Hemaraj K Raghavan, Site SP Manager,  
Michelin’s site in Chennai

**"It was an incredible journey for the past two years. There was a strong will and commitment from the site leadership towards creating a disability-inclusive workplace. Being based on the site for the entire duration of the project helped me to understand Michelin’s needs and employees’ mind-set, and provide customized advice and coaching to meet those needs. There were ground-breaking initiatives and Michelin continues to push forward to fully include people with disabilities."**

Jose Kurian, Disability & Employment Advisor, HI (India Programme)

## Part 4: Expand your thinking and start the journey to be a disability-inclusive employer

Two years passed since the partnership between Michelin and Humanity & Inclusion began – the start of a journey of Michelin’s manufacturing site in Chennai to become disability-inclusive. With HI’s expertise and guidance, the collaborative effort has resulted in high-level commitments from Michelin’s leadership at the site-level.

If you are ready to embark on a journey to be a disability-inclusive organisation, these are the key insights and recommendations from our own collaborative experience that will support you in moving forward.

### Make a commitment and drive change from the top

Fostering a genuinely inclusive workplace where each employee with and without disabilities is valued and respected, starts with a commitment from the senior leadership and employees across the organisation. Without senior leadership stepping up and inspiring the employees to follow direction, real change will not happen.

- Set goals for disability inclusion internally as well as externally.
- Adopt formal expressions of commitments and set clear targets

about the recruitment<sup>1</sup> of people with disabilities and create ways to ensure that people with disabilities have career opportunities and achieve their full potential at the company.

- Communicate the rationale and the impact of disability inclusion on business
- Consult with people with disabilities to understand their lived experiences, and center their lived experience when advancing the disability inclusion agenda

### Engage with experts and establish partnerships

It is important for the business to gain knowledge and build relationships with organisations for people with disabilities to successfully transform the workplace to be disability-inclusive.

Partnerships serve as a vehicle to mobilise and share expertise and can help you become a leader in disability inclusive employment. Partnerships with NGOs like Humanity & Inclusion can bring a wealth of professional and technical knowledge to provide advice and support on

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<sup>1</sup> HI recognizes that inclusion must occur across the talent life cycle, and that recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities is all equally important. However, HI recommends that employers with little to no experience start with recruitment targets.

employment practices and can help through various stages of the disability inclusion journey.

- Build connections with a local community organisations to see disability through a different lens and gather an understanding of the current situation and existing gaps.
- Get engaged with organisations for people with disabilities, including accessibility audit experts and local employment agencies.
- Continue to share the best practices with other organisations who are starting on their disability inclusion journey – what you have learnt and encourage others to do.

### Raise awareness and build capability

Empowering leadership and employees with knowledge disrupts stereotypes, changes attitudes and changes perceptions about people with disabilities. It allows everyone in the organisation to make better business decisions and create an environment where the openness and acceptance of people with disabilities thrive.

- Sensitise, inform and enable leadership with training programmes to build awareness and understanding about people with disabilities, and provide resources to help line managers

build a supportive culture for people with disabilities.

- Promote an understanding of the impact of the language and appropriate etiquette amongst employees to prevent discrimination.
- Recognise International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December) to demonstrate commitment.
- Recognise International World Days to raise awareness and promote the rights of people with disabilities.
- Organise disability-inclusive events. e.g. sports events, to encourage the spirit of sportsmanship amongst people with disabilities and without disabilities.
- Create peer-to-peer support amongst employees with and without disabilities such as employee networks or resource groups.
- Publicise stories of impact (role models, business success and employee perspectives) and share good practices on internal as well as external channels.

### Make reasonable adjustments

Each person with a disability will have a different support mechanism that works for them. Ensuring that all employees with disabilities have access to reasonable adjustments enable them to enjoy equal opportunities, perform their tasks to the

fullest and encourages them to deliver to their full potential at the workplace.

- Set up a reasonable adjustment plan in close collaboration with employees with disabilities.
- Develop job announcements, descriptions and application forms in various formats that are accessible for people with disabilities
- Redefine policies, processes and strategies of recruitment of job seekers with disabilities. Examples of this range widely, from the presence of a sign language interpreter at an interview, to holding an interview at a particular time of day, to accommodate medication needs and flexible working practices.
- Ensure the built environment of the workplace, transport systems and information and communication ecosystems are accessible for people with disabilities – such as parking spaces, wheelchair accessible doorways, ramps at entries and exits of the buildings, wide corridors and easy access to workstations and accessible bathrooms.

### Share your experience

Sharing success stories and lessons learned both internally within institutions as well as externally can help call in institutions. A simple conversation can expand people's views, help us to be better informed and more connected to

our colleagues. Making changes to achieve disability inclusion at the workplace that are sustainable starts with a meaningful conversation, and sharing of experiences can be a great platform to initiate these conversations. The real impact of conversation is the changes that emerge after – for this to happen, organisations must be willing to listen and be willing to share their experiences.

Examples of how to do this could include:

- Facilitate conversations, using internal channels and cultivate an understanding;
- Provide real examples of exclusionary workplaces and their transformation toward becoming more inclusive, to bridge the knowledge gap and share through experience;
- Make genuine and honest efforts to be disability-inclusive.

Unlocking the potential of people with disabilities – a large subset of the global marketplace – will have a transformative effect on business and pave the way for building a more fair and equitable workplace.





## ADVISING YOU ON YOUR INCLUSION JOURNEY

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### Michelin's Inclusion journey to become a disability inclusive employer

Michelin India partnered with Humanity & Inclusion – India Programme to transform the workplace to be disability-inclusive. The pilot project began in June 2019 took place in Michelin's manufacturing plant in Chennai. Two years have passed and the collaborative effort has made huge progress in making the site to be more inviting and productive for current and future employees with disabilities. The document has recorded the journey and key insights, hoping to inspire you to embark on a journey to be a disability-inclusive organisation.

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If you would like to partner with Humanity & Inclusion – India Programme, please contact:

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