

## **Develop guidelines on disability-inclusive business practices**

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### **Overview**

Vietnam is one of the countries with a high disability rate in the Asia-Pacific region, accounting for 6.11% of the total population<sup>1</sup>. Rural areas have a rate of persons with disabilities 1.4 times higher than urban areas. Regarding the types of disabilities, in the group of 16 years and older, 7.54% of people have mobility impairments, followed by cognitive impairments (2.68%), hearing impairments (2.21%), visual impairments (1.14%), and communication impairments (1.1%). In addition, the number of persons with disabilities with two or more functional abilities accounts for 3.65% of the population. In general, the living conditions of persons with disabilities have improved much compared to before, creating favorable conditions for them to integrate into society, participate in business, shopping, and daily consumption activities.

Vietnam's policy system for persons with disabilities is being adjusted to remove barriers and ensure equality in the rights and benefits of persons with disabilities in all areas, including the consumer sector. Specifically, Vietnam has joined the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) since 2007 and has issued the Law on persons with disabilities since 2010 along with policies to support persons with disabilities to integrate into society such as ensuring access to public construction and transportation<sup>2</sup>, access to information<sup>3</sup>. Persons with disabilities are identified as a vulnerable consumer group, prioritized for protection with separate regulations (The 8<sup>th</sup> Article of the Law on Consumer Rights Protection 2023). Besides, there are sanctions against businesses if there are violations related to protecting consumer rights or related to providing goods and services to persons with disabilities. However, persons with disabilities as workers, apprentices, and consumers still face many barriers in reality.

### **The challenges and needs of consumers as persons with disabilities in Vietnam**

An online survey on shopping needs was conducted for 97 persons with disabilities representing 17 provinces/cities across the country, with the majority having mobility disabilities (accounting for 79.7%); visual disability is 8%, hearing and speech disability is 6.7%, the rest of 5.6% are other types of disability and intellectual disability.

#### ***The needs of consumers with disabilities***

The items chosen by persons with disabilities to be purchased by over 50% include: (1) Necessities (food, drinks, daily consumer goods): 84.1%; (2) Personal and family items (clothes, shoes, phones, refrigerators, etc.): 67%; (3) Health care goods/services (medical examination and treatment, medicine and functional foods, healthcare and rehabilitation tools): 51.1%. Regarding the purchasing patterns of persons with disabilities surveyed, more

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<sup>1</sup> General Statistics Office (2024), *Vietnam National survey on people with disabilities 2023 (VDS 2023)*.

<sup>2</sup> QCVN 82:2019/BGTVT on the National Technical Regulation on urban passenger vehicles to ensure accessibility and usability for people with disabilities; The 2006 Civil Aviation Law, amended in 2014; QCVN 10:2024/BXD on National Technical Regulation on Constructions Accessibility.

<sup>3</sup> Circular No. 26/2020/TT-BTTTT provides the application of standards and technologies to support people with disabilities in accessing and utilizing information and communication products and services

than 74% choose to buy at grocery stores. The next is online shopping (64.7%), local markets (63.5%), supermarkets and convenience stores (45.9%).

### ***The barriers of consumers with disabilities***

Barriers that persons with disabilities often encounter when shopping are identified as: (1) Barriers to accessing buildings at shopping locations (inaccessible entrances, walkways, and shelves): 65.1 %; (2) Barriers to accessing product information and after-sales services: 27.7%; (3) Barriers to service and support attitudes for persons with disabilities when shopping: 26.5%.

Regarding the type of business, food, entertainment and healthcare services have the most limitations for disabled consumers with over 52% of respondents for food and entertainment services and 47.7% of respondents for healthcare services. Regarding online shopping, customers with hearing and speech impairments face significant challenges in confirming orders and deliveries due to many online shopping platforms lacking features or tools to support communication for this group.

### **Some cases of disability-inclusive business**

There are various opportunities and benefits of disability- inclusive business such as increased revenue, competitive advantages, enhanced brand image, and reduced legal risks. Many global companies have incorporated disability inclusion into their business strategy in various sectors such as adaptive fashion<sup>4</sup> and accessible tourism services<sup>5</sup>. In Vietnam, some businesses also tend to develop products and services to meet the needs of customers with disabilities. However, most businesses do not have a disability-inclusive approach in their business strategies. Surveys and consultations with a number of retail businesses, retreat services and small size enterprises in health care in Vietnam show that the current state of disability integration of businesses is recorded as follows:

<b>Hotel &amp; restaurant<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>Supermarkets, convenience stores<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Health care service<sup>8</sup></b>
<b>Regarding facilities</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide basic access for disabled customers (rooms, restrooms, public spaces);</li> <li>- Willing to adjust facilities to support customers with disabilities.</li> <li>- No parking space has been arranged for customers with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some supermarket chains like Co.opmart, have regulations on infrastructure to ensure access for everyone: entrance, accessible toilets, support counters.</li> <li>- High shelves are difficult to access for persons with mobility.</li> <li>- Parking spaces for persons with disabilities have not been arranged; There are no fitting rooms suitable for persons with disabilities.</li> <li>- Convenience stores and mini markets have yet to prioritize accessible infrastructure, such as ramps, clear aisles, and lower shelves, to accommodate individuals with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not calculate access to facilities for customers with disabilities.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.silverts.com/ca/>

<sup>5</sup> [TUI | AccessAble](#)

<sup>6</sup> Muong Thanh Hotel in Dong Ha and Tam Ky cities; Parkview Hotel in Hue city and The Field Restaurant in Hoi An city.

<sup>7</sup> Coopmart Supermarket in Dong Ha city, Tops Market and Winmart in Hanoi city.

<sup>8</sup> Xuan An company in Dong Ha city, Quang Tri province

Information access		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The product information is designed to be clear, legible, and accessible.</li> <li>- There is no support feature for persons with visual disabilities.</li> </ul>		
Customer services		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is no separate policy to support disabled customers. However, if there are customers with disabilities, there will be provided support from booking the service, while using the service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coopmart has established guidelines to train staff in assisting customers with special needs such as persons with disabilities.</li> <li>- Public promotion policy, posted periodically.</li> <li>- There is no separate policy to support customers with disabilities (such as in payment, online ordering).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not include policies to support customers with disabilities.</li> </ul>

### Proposing disability-inclusive business practices

Within the framework of this document, disability-inclusive business practices are proposed for groups with mobility disability, hearing and speech disabilities and visual disability. These recommendations are designed to ensure consumer rights and meet the needs of persons with disabilities focusing on the criteria of access to facilities, access to information, support policies, and customer services.

#### *\* For direct selling channel:*

The practices are proposed for 03 areas including retail business (supermarket systems, convenience stores, people's markets), entertainment and retreat services, and health care services:

- **Facilities:** the implemented items must comply with the national accessibility standards, such as QCVN 10/2024-BXD.
- **Access to information:** the methods of product introduction should be used to ensure accessibility for all types of disabilities, such as using suitable visuals for the deaf and audio descriptions for the blind. Additionally, policies supporting customers with disabilities should be published.
- **Purchase and payment services:** Flexible payment methods to assist customers with disabilities, providing the skills to support customers with disabilities for sales staff, and tools to facilitate the delivery and receipt of goods for customers with disabilities (particularly for customers with hearing and speech disabilities).
- **Sales support and complaint handling:** develop and comply with legal regulations for customers with disabilities.
- **Enhancing expertise and capabilities in providing support to customers with disabilities:** have separate rules and regulations related to customers with disabilities, and regular training and workshops on disability inclusion must be provided to staff.

#### *\* For online sale channels through e-commerce platforms:*

- **Accessible facilities and information:** accessible sales website/App for customers with disabilities, suitable for different types of disabilities, especially for individuals with hearing and speech disability (who are potential online shopping customers).
- **Online support services:** providing a variety of information channels to support convenient online ordering and delivery for people with disabilities such as instructional videos, sms, email, chat box.

- **Support policies and customer care services:** providing and publicizing information on complaints and after-sales; free return policy for customers with disabilities; communication and working skills with customers with disabilities for care and delivery staff.

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