

Phase 2 - Leave no one behind!

Mainstreaming Disability
in Humanitarian Action

External project evaluation
conducted by

HESSE
Consulting Group

Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Germany ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009 and recognised a human rights-based understanding of disability. In 2015, the CRPD committee's concluding observations of the first state report on the implementation of the CRPD showed gaps in its application regarding Art. 11 on humanitarian assistance and Art. 32 on international cooperation. Germany showed its commitment to move forward on implementing the obligations from Article 11 by signing the non-binding Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (WHS Disability Inclusion Charter) in 2016. At the 2016 Global Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Germany declared seven specific commitments towards including persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. One of these commitments was to ensure that humanitarian programmes reflect the different needs and capacities of women, girls, men, and boys with disabilities by 2020.

The Project

The project "Leave No One Behind (LNOB)" was developed to initiate and strengthen actions to cover the gaps pointed out in the concluding observations of the first state report on the implementation of the UN CRPD. In the 1st phase, the project provided awareness-raising seminars, technical sector-specific trainings, and coaching activities. Phase 2 - 'Leave no one behind!': Mainstreaming of Disability in Humanitarian Action', was built on the outcomes, experiences, good practices, and lessons learned of phase 1.

Handicap International e.V. in cooperation with Christoffel-Blindenmission/ Christian Blind Mission e.V. (CBM) and the Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict (IFHV) at the Ruhr University Bochum have been implementing the second project phase since 2018. The project was financed by the German Federal Foreign Office with a total budget of € 1.368.818,50 for the period of 09/2018 – 31/12/2021. The project was planned and implemented to guarantee equal protection for persons with disabilities.

Phase 2 aimed at ensuring persons with disabilities enjoy equal and meaningful participation, safety, and protection in international humanitarian action both in general and in German-funded assistance in particular. To achieve this the project intended to build core competencies on disability mainstreaming and effectively engaging persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

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Three result areas were envisaged to achieve the project's overall objective:

- Support for the development of the global IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action
- Capacity and awareness-building activities for humanitarian actors in Germany and their local partners.
- Collaboration with two German universities and applying accompanying research to strengthen the evidence base for disability-inclusive programming and coordination of humanitarian action.

Methodology of Evaluation

The evaluation had the objective to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project's activities and inform further planning for the development of a follow-up project. The evaluation was based on participative and strength-based approaches. The evaluation aimed to include all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation to ensure participation and ownership. In addition to the participative strength-based approach, Kirkpatrick's model was used for evaluating trainings/seminars/coaching. The methods for the evaluation and tools were structured around the above mentioned three result areas of the project.

The methodology used for the evaluation included key informant interviews with stakeholders, online surveys, focus group discussions and desk review of project documents. Key informant interviews were conducted with the project staff and participants of various activities of the project. Twenty-two stakeholders were interviewed. The online survey was sent to all 341 participants of the capacity building trainings and forty responses were received (12%). The respondents belonged to local NGOs (LNGO), International NGOs (INGO) based in Germany, Organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD) and state actors. The INGOs were the major group of respondents (65%). A focus group discussion was conducted with an organisation that underwent technical support and coaching, and two FGDs with participants of regional trainings .

Limitations

The evaluation was conducted at the time of the year when most of the stakeholders were involved in year-end tasks or holiday breaks. The responses received for the online survey were less and many stakeholders could not give

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time for interviews and FGDs. The evaluation team could not get enough participants for the result areas 1 and 3. The time available for data collection, analysis was also limited. Data from the interviews, FGDs conducted, responses received for online survey and review of documents were analysed to arrive at the findings of the evaluation.

Major Findings

Relevance: The project was important and relevant to support achieving/fulfilling Germany's commitment towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. The project's involvement in developing and disseminating the IASC Guidelines for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action is most relevant as the guidelines set out essential actions that humanitarian actors must take to include persons with disabilities. It brought together different stakeholders to establish the IASC GL, and placed persons with disabilities at the centre of humanitarian action, both as actors and as members of affected populations. The project developed its capacity building trainings based on a needs assessment survey. Hence, the trainings implemented by the project were based on what the humanitarian actors stated as needed and most relevant for their work.

Effectiveness: The project took appropriate actions in the sudden pandemic crisis by effectively converting all its activities, especially training, to an online mode and providing additional trainings on meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in COVID-19 response. The online survey respondents confirmed the relevance of the trainings to their work. Involvement of persons with disabilities/organisations of persons with disabilities increased the relevance of the trainings. The inclusion of teaching modules, based on the IASC guidelines, in the NOHA master's degree and AKKON Bachelor's degree were appropriate as the students graduating from these courses will be familiar with actions needed to include persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

The effectiveness of the project was seen in its support for the development, publication, translation, dissemination and first operationalisation of the IASC Guidelines and had a substantial impact on capacitating German humanitarian NGOs and their field offices/partners. It provided a common framework for all practitioners to work with. Respondents of online surveys and FGDs found the Must Do Actions in the guidelines as the most meaningful. The collection of disaggregated data was not a common practice

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among humanitarian workers, but the project's trainings resulted in participants ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, collection of disaggregated data for planning, removal of barriers, implementing and monitoring humanitarian action.

The capacity building initiative of the project had two streams, trainings on inclusive humanitarian action, and coaching/ technical support. The project team conceptualised, developed, and implemented trainings. It also effectively introduced and delivered inputs on inclusion in the trainings by VENRO, THW and GTO et al. of the WASH network.

Participants of online trainings and FGDs confirmed that the trainings met their expectations. The trainings strengthened the programming skills to include persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. Participants reported having initiated actions to include persons with disabilities, with some having started discussions with their partners about the inclusion of persons with disabilities and others have revised their processes. 52% of online survey respondents stated that they have adapted their tools. 43% of the respondents have involved persons with disabilities in their programmes. Participants of the FGDs considered the involvement of persons with disabilities/ organisations of persons with disabilities in the trainings to be effective.

Introducing a training module in the NOHA master's degree course for 'International Humanitarian Action' and bachelor's course in AKKON University has been effective and many students have approached for internships and to do master's thesis on inclusive humanitarian action. At the IFHV, the module has been included in the course for humanitarian workers through the Academy for Humanitarian Action (AHA). The project team participated in many public events and provided inputs on disability inclusion which effectively highlighted the rights, needs of persons with disabilities and measures to include them in humanitarian action.

Applied research on the Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, was completed and a research report has been published. Articles and papers based on the research and a review of literature have been published. The research report, articles, blog posts, and a literature review provided much-needed scientific rigour and strengthened the knowledge base. The project team efficiently managed the pandemic situation. The uncertainty in the early days hindered the regular office work and implementation of project activities. The project team sourced the necessary

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tools, reoriented all the activities and adapted the content of the trainings to be implemented in virtual mode. A survey analysis of the trainings completed just before the evaluation reports that the participants appreciated the interactive, interesting sessions conducted using online tools such as Padlet.

One of the critical challenges faced was digital accessibility, the project understood and adapted digital trainings for interactive sessions in an inclusive, accessible, digital teaching-learning environment.

Efficiency: The project had the steering, technical and project progress committees to implement and monitor the project efficiently. The steering committee, composed of senior management from the partners, gave support and backing for the team for decision making and resolved conflicting situations. The technical committee, consisting of technical experts, worked towards aligning approaches and clarifying technical content. The project progress team ensured coordination of activities to reach the project's objectives and kept the entire team updated. The coordinator and officer have strived to fulfil various roles and tasks the project demanded. There is a need for increasing human resources in technical expertise, communication, and coordination.

The project had sustainability built into its result areas. The development and dissemination of the IASC Guidelines is a significant sustainability factor. The guidelines are a guidance document with actionable recommendations and considerations for humanitarian actors at different levels and functions of the humanitarian system, and mostly for programmers. The guidelines will sustain beyond this project. The project supported the Disability Reference Group (DRG), the DRG has developed E-Learning and face-to-face/ online trainings packages based on the teaching content of the trainings of the project. The inclusion of persons with disabilities is integrated into the trainings of VENRO, THW/ GTO et al. of the WASH network, and Caritas (regional trainings).

Sustainability: The trainings have made humanitarian actors understand the vulnerable situations persons with disabilities are exposed to in crises and see the need to plan for their meaningful participation, access to humanitarian action and protection proactively. Many participants have started using the knowledge, tools, and best practices in their work. Coaching/ technical support of the project to the organisation has resulted in the revision of policies and practices for inclusive programming. As participants of the

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trainings and organisation who underwent coaching continue to practice what they have learnt, the effects of the project will be further sustained.

The investment in students who are future humanitarian workers by introducing teaching modules in humanitarian action curriculum, supports inclusion in future humanitarian action and thereby sustains the project's efforts. There is not much evidence on disability inclusion, and the research adds to the repertoire of knowledge. The literature reviews, the research reports, and articles based on Cox's Bazar's research and South Sudan add more to the knowledge base. The attention disability inclusion has gained in academia is likely to sustain after the project period, especially with published articles and evidence-based research.

Recommendations

Relevance can be furthered by

- Operationalising IASC Guidelines with development of advanced trainings and creation/ adaptation of tools focusing on selected sectors such as WASH/ Health.
- Building new alliances and deepening existing alliances in networks such as THW, GTO et. al, Protection WG of the KoA.

The effectiveness of the project can be increased by

- Selected specific sectors for advanced trainings. These sectors could be identified in the formulation of the project proposal for phase 3. The trainings can be a combination of online and face-to-face modes.
- Participants of the trainings are periodically contacted via email and or newsletters on inclusion to keep the disability agenda on top of their mind. The development of virtual platforms for sharing practices, asking questions and linking with other practitioners will help continue the effects of the training.
- The project should maintain efforts to hire staff with disabilities for the upcoming project and continue efforts of engagement with OPD stakeholders. It would help the project to work in tandem with the DRG group for capacitating OPDs to work in humanitarian crises and with other humanitarian actors.

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The next phase of the project efficiency can be increased by

- Furthering existing understanding on working together and clarity on individual partner responsibilities. A phase with reduced project activities wherein an externally facilitated workshop of five full working days with all key staff is to be planned. The retreat, as well as the reduced activities time, should be utilised for developing a joined understanding of the principles of cross-organisational collaboration, approach to decision making, team building and clarification of roles and responsibilities. There is a need to test and practice collaboration (common planning, implementation, and reporting tools, particularly if collaboration tools like Slack, Trello, or Monday.com are considered). Collaboration should build on what has worked in phase 2 for collaboration and agree on the concrete modality for phase 3.
- Periodical deep dive reflective review meetings (retrospectives) to relook and adjust the theory of change, learn together, and learn from one another complementary approaches that strengthen each resulting in increased quality.
- Increased human resources especially on coordination, communication and MEAL and technical expertise.
- Developing a global and regional resource pool that organisations can connect for technical support.

Sustainability of the next phase can be enhanced by

- Integration of the project's modules into existing training channels of an organisation will institutionalise the learning in those organisations. For example, the German Red Cross has a learning platform to integrate e-learning modules.
- The project can explore possibilities of linking with universities in the field countries for research. The partners will be in contact with universities in the field. Linking a selected group of scholars and practitioners for workshops, conferences, and joint research with the current research team will contribute to mutual learning.