

Name and location of the project	Phase 2 – Leave No One Behind, Germany
Duration of the project	09/2018 – 31/12/2021 (40 months, including 4 months no-cost extension).
General objective of the project and expected results	<p>Overall Objective</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Expected Results</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for the development of the global IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and sharing good practices on disability mainstreaming in global coordination mechanisms. 2. Capacity and awareness-building activities for humanitarian actors in Germany and their local partners at the field level on both an operational and organisational level to mainstream disability and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. 3. Collaboration with two German universities and applied research to strengthen the evidence base for disability inclusive programming and coordination of humanitarian action.
Specific objective and expected results in relation to the good practice	<p>Capacity and awareness-building activities for humanitarian actors in Germany and their local partners at the field level on both an operational and organisational level to mainstream disability and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.</p>
What particular aspect of the project does this good practice address?	Virtual Accessibility

Background

Persons with disabilities are estimated to represent 15 per cent of the world's population¹ and are among the most marginalised people in crisis-affected communities². In disasters, their mortality rate is two to four times higher than that of persons without disabilities³. Hence, there is a need to focus on including persons with disabilities in various aspects of humanitarian actions such as disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

Handicap International Germany (HI), Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM) and the Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict (IFHV) at Ruhr University Bochum implemented together the project “Phase 2 – Leave No One Behind!”. The project's activities brought awareness on disability inclusion in humanitarian action, supported the development of the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, built capacities of German NGOs and their local partners, strengthened inclusion of persons with disabilities in academic curricula and events, and enhanced the evidence base through applied research.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the project activities because face-to-face meetings had to move to an online format to meet the social safety requirements of the government. As the activities were based on face-to-face meetings and trainings. The project coordination and activities had to be changed and adapted to suit the restrictions phase. The project team mastered digital accessibility and provided guidance to others.

What is the problem being addressed?

Significant activities under result 2 and 3 were trainings and guest lectures. Due to Covid 19, travelling, face-to-face trainings and meetings became impossible. The project team had to adapt trainings to a digital mode, ensuring interactive sessions in an inclusive, accessible, digital teaching-learning environment. Conversion of face-to-face training to digital mode needed detailed planning to adapt the content to suit virtual delivery. Group activities and sessions that involved practical physical action had to be modified.

What happened?

Digital accessibility became critical in the pandemic situation. The project team sourced suitable online tools for interaction and digital accessibility that allowed project coordination through virtual meetings and centralised document storage and sharing. The online collaboration software Padlet and CryptPad allowed the training sessions to be interactive and engaging. Even

¹ WHO and World Bank, World Report on Disability (2011)

² Report of the United Nations Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit, One Humanity, Shared Responsibility

³ Katsunori Fujii, 'The Great East Japan Earthquake and Disabled Persons', in Disability Information Resources, Japan

Promising Practice

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those who are not technically savvy could use these platforms. The project team effectively used live captioning for accessibility and other virtual technology such as a Padlet for interactive learning.

In a survey analysis of the trainings, the participants appreciated the interactive sessions and accessibility.

The project team gained expertise in digital accessibility and provided technical assistance for accessibility to other organisations for their conferences and workshops. One of the project team members stated, "Learning and implementing online accessibility was challenging initially, but later the team became adept at it and could train others".

What changed?

The project team ensured accessibility in virtual training and conferences. Ensuring accessibility was not only to include persons with disabilities, but also to showcase how accessibility can be provided in such a virtual environment. Such a practical demonstration gave confidence to the participants that inclusion is possible with proactive planning. The project partners organised tool kits and training for digital accessibility.

Organisations sought the project team's expertise to support in their conferences. The organiser of the Humanitarian Congress at Berlin (2021) succinctly states, "The expertise provided by the project made the congress accessible to many, it widened the group of people who participated. The project team helped us ask the right questions to assist those who needed it. When there is a limited budget, we need to prioritise which accessibility feature to include; for example, live captioning will be useful for many while sign language might reach fewer participants".

How?

The project team was agile and adapted to the Covid-19 situation by scanning for available tools, appropriate software and services to provide and ensure accessibility. The technical and project implementing team discussed, debated, and reworked the training contents, group exercises, games, and other training activities to suit virtual delivery.

The changes called for proactive planning for potential Covid-19 scenarios to continue providing capacity building activities. The agility of the team, support from senior management and approval from donors made these adaptations possible.

Apart from sourcing tools and adapting training content, the team had to be skilled users on meeting/conference software and accessibility to deliver the training.

Recommendations

The software, accessibility and reasonable accommodation cost and the budget available will always be a critical concern. It is essential to consider specific requirements for reasonable accommodation and what will benefit a maximum number of participants within a given budget.