A Gradual Process of Transformation

What we can learn, replicate and scale from World Food Programme's and Humanity & Inclusion's pilot project on including persons with disabilities in food security and livelihood programming in Western Equatoria, South Sudan

Sabrina Ebert

Contents

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Description: Focus group discussion with community leaders in Yambio.

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About the author:

Sabrina Ebert is an inclusive humanitarian action technical officer at Handicap International e.V., also known as Humanity & Inclusion (HI), and Doctor of Public Health candidate at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to affected populations
B&E	Barriers and enablers
CBPP	Community-based participatory planning
CFA	Cash for asset
CP	Cooperating partner
CRF	Corporate Results Framework
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DI FP	Disability inclusion focal point
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FFA	Food Assistance for Assets
FGD	Focus group discussion
FLA	Field-level agreement
GFD	General food distribution
HARISS	Humanitarian and Resilience Programme in South Sudan
HI	Handicap International – Humanity & Inclusion
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organization
KII	Key informant interview
LGPD	Local group of persons with disabilities
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NNGO	National non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPD	Organization of persons with disabilities
PMC	Project management committee
SAMS	Smallholder agriculture market support
SOP	Standard operating procedure
TOR	Terms of reference
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping
WES	Western Equatoria State
WFP	World Food Programme
WGQs	Washington Group Questions (Washington Group Short Set on Functioning)

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Description: Angelina lives in the refugee camp in Juba, where she attends the counselling sessions run by HI. She makes traditional jewellery and sells it in the camp to earn some money.

Abstract

Introduction

In recent years, inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action has become a more widely acknowledged commitment among humanitarian actors, with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action* (hereinafter referred to as the "IASC Guidelines"). Partnerships between mainstream humanitarian actors who want to become more inclusive and those with recognized expertise to share (disability-focused organizations) have become more common. Working groups on disability and age inclusion and collaborations between disability-focused and mainstreaming organizations have grown. In Western Equatoria, South Sudan, Humanity & Inclusion (HI) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have collaborated to implement a seven-month pilot project to strengthen inclusion and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in the food security and livelihood programmes of WFP and its cooperating partners (CPs). At the beginning of the project, a participatory assessment was conducted to identify barriers, enablers, opportunities and entry points to inform subsequent project activities. The project provided capacity development opportunities to WFP, CPs, individuals with disabilities and members from the Union of Persons with Disabilities Yambio, a local group of persons with disabilities, as well as two state ministries, i.e. the state Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and the state Ministry of Agriculture, and the community/community leaders in Yambio County. At the end of the seven-month project, promising practices and lessons learned were documented to ensure their continuation. Nevertheless, further research was required to

better understand success factors and hindering factors that ensured the sustainability of changes, and that could foster replication in another context or scaling up in the same context.

Methods

The study is based on primary and secondary data. The researcher started with a secondary exploratory content analysis of the main WFP, HI and context-specific documents. A total of 41 documents were reviewed as background information in preparation for the primary data collection, and 23 documents were considered in the exploratory content analysis. This content analysis allowed for better understanding of how the inclusion of persons with disabilities is reflected in key organizations and/or context-specific policies, strategies and guidance documents. The primary data collection included semi-structured interviews with WFP, HI, CP staff (international non-governmental organizations [INGOs] and national non-governmental organizations [NNGOs]), a representative from the local group of persons with disabilities, a representative of a national/international organization of persons with disabilities and representatives from two state ministries. A total of 17 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted. In addition, five focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted, three with community leaders, one with members of the local group of persons with disabilities and one with the disability inclusion focal points (DI FPs). The information from the FGDs triangulated with the information from the KIIs and the content analysis. The primary data was analysed in a mainly deductive manner, based on the four "must do" actions, facilitating factors and hindering factors (divided into cooperative, institutional and contextual factors).

Findings

The seven-month pilot project laid the foundation for the gradual inclusion of persons with disabilities in food security and livelihood programmes in Yambio, Western Equatoria. The project itself followed the four "must do" actions recommended in the IASC Guidelines. Many of interventions and promising practices started as part of the project continued or had an impact on the activities carried out afterwards. Persons with disabilities were meaningfully involved, e.g. as co-facilitators, enumerators and project staff, and continue to be meaningfully involved in several food security/livelihood activities and projects. All stakeholders who benefited from the project continued to be highly sensitized to the rights, barriers, opportunities and capacities of persons with disabilities to access and meaningfully participate in food security and livelihood programmes. Some shared their knowledge by raising awareness in the community or in their own organization. The role of DI FPs, persons with disabilities and community leaders was particularly important for this. Persons with disabilities benefited strongly from being informed about their rights and became more confident in raising their voices during the project. The identification of barriers, enablers and capacities at the beginning of the project had a lasting impact on their understanding, identification and prioritization of these in the organizations' own projects and programmes. However, there is a need for further refresher training, as well as practical, tailored and in-depth training and technical support to collect, analyse and use qualitative data for programming.

The research also identified several factors that contributed to the project's success and the continuation of promising practices, as well as factors that hindered the continuation of such

practices and would need to be improved in the future. Senior management buy-in and approval of funding for a disability-specific project was critical, even if this did not lead to the project's continuation or a new project phase due to funding constraints. More time and financial/human resources are needed to continue this work and address longer-term barriers. Cooperation and collaboration at eye level, as well as a participatory and individualized approach by HI based on the needs of WFP, CPs, state ministries and the Union of Persons with Disabilities Yambio, was also a success factor in ensuring ownership by the different stakeholders involved. All stakeholders welcomed the focus on continuous learning and inter-agency peer exchange during the project. However, this stalled after the end of the project due to staff changes, lack of time and lack of continuous technical guidance. Some of the policies, strategies and guidelines examined in the context analysis showed that inclusion of persons with disabilities is seen as a cross-cutting issue or that specific resources have been developed. However, these need to be translated into practical tools for front-line staff that are in line with the IASC Guidelines. There is a potential opportunity to directly apply the acquired knowledge from the training and review the tool, which would promote ownership of it. Lastly, the project benefited from a good understanding of all contextual factors that can inhibit or positively influence the inclusion of persons with disabilities in a community. The involvement of the line ministry for persons with disabilities was important to foster the Government's understanding and ownership, ultimately strengthening social cohesion that is inclusive of persons with disabilities within this context.

Conclusion

The seven-month pilot project contributed, and continues to contribute, to enhancing the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their access to food security and livelihood opportunities in Yambio, Western Equatoria.

The project was a practical example that followed the four "must do" actions recommended in the IASC Guidelines, thereby promoting further application of these actions among all actors involved in the project. The scope and duration of the project enabled the HI, WFP, CPs, two state ministries, community leaders and the informal group of persons with disabilities to work together on the short-term barriers they had identified at the beginning of the project. However, more time, financial and human resources are needed to address longer-term barriers.

Recommendations

Replicating the project in a different context:

- Build a **project on an existing partnership** and use each other's expertise in a complementary way.

- Ensure **joint ownership** of the project through a joint proposal-writing process.

- Ensure **senior management buy-in** (at the country, regional and/or headquarter levels).

- Consider **contextual factors** that may positively influence or prevent a positive project outcome, such as **social cohesion, trust and acceptance within the community** and frequent/periodic emergencies.

- Ensure **meaningful participation** of persons with disabilities **throughout the project, as active contributors.**

- **Identify (in)formal groups that are interested and have the capacity to be engaged.**

- Ensure that **project activities are inclusive and accessible** for project staff and those benefiting from the project.

- Conduct a **joint barriers and enablers (B&E) assessment** at the beginning of the project and **regular feedback meetings** during the project, then identify **promising practices and lessons learned** at the end of project.

- **Train persons with disabilities on their rights and any other necessary skills** to help them actively and effectively engage with the project activities.

- **Provide sensitization sessions to decrease stigmatization and discrimination.**

- Ensure that **training and one-to-one technical support** follows a **participatory and tailored approach** to achieve maximum impact and ownership.

- Train a **pool of DI FPs** to support and guide their own organizations.

- **Enable inter-agency peer exchange and learning,** and share promising practices across the region for broader learning.

- Use the **Inclusion Working Group as a forum to exchange** ideas, encourage peer learning, plan joint events and spread advocacy messages.

Improving and scaling the project in the same context:

- Improve the **timing of the project**, aligning it to the project/funding cycle, and extending, if possible, **the timeframe to two to three years to address more long-term barriers.**

- **Share project results and good practices** of this project **with senior management, and use them** to secure more funding for disability inclusion, including for other locations.

- **Detail the next steps/action plan** to ensure continuity of activities after the project's completion, e.g. **ensure continuity of coordination mechanisms** by connecting them to existing mechanisms.

- **Consider the representation of persons with different disabilities and of different genders, ages and socioeconomic/displacement status** when consulting the community.

- Increase the **representation of persons with psychosocial** and **intellectual disabilities** of different ages and genders.

- **Collaborate** with persons with different disabilities and representative organizations to **improve accessibility and reasonable accommodation.**

- **Use ongoing projects and activities** for group work **in training,** and **link training with a process to review and adapt existing tools, guidance or policies** based on the four "must do" actions of the IASC Guidelines.

- **Strengthen data collection using the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning and B&E assessments.**

- **Conduct follow-up sessions** and conduct more in-depth **coverage of intersectionality** (gender, age and disability).

- **Expand (community) awareness sessions, including to more rural areas.**

- **Support the Union of Persons with Disabilities Yambio in accessing resources to continue certain activities.**

- **Improve access to and availability of income-generating activities** for men and women with different disabilities.

- **Set up a working group/task force on data coordination** to identify and use existing data sets and learn from other data-collection efforts.

- Consider **how to maintain knowledge management** through DI FPs, despite staff turnover.

- Consider the **capacities and responsibilities of state ministries** on **data collection** and **policy implementation.**

Keywords

Disability; disability inclusion; inclusive humanitarian action; "must do" actions; IASC Guidelines;

food (in-)security; livelihood; partnership; capacity development; technical support; training;

South Sudan; Yambio; Western Equatoria

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Description: Felix, 39, has been supported by HI through its rehabilitation and livelihood project.

1. Introduction

> *"… [E]nsuring that their [persons with disabilities] opinions are tak[en] into consideration, as humanitarian actors, that has always been a challenge, which might not change at once, but it requires a gradual process of transformation. Yes."*
>
> *Disability rights activist and representative of an organization of persons with disabilities (OPD)*

The latest data on South Sudan shows that 9.4 million people[1] are projected to be in need of assistance in 2023, of which 24 percent are women, 54 percent are children and 15 percent are persons with disabilities.[2] Persons with disabilities, children, female-headed households

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1   South Sudan has noted an increase of people in need in recent years, from 8.3 million in 2021 to 8.9 million in 2022 (OCHA, 2022c).

2   As per the globally recommended 15 percent prevalence of persons living with disability (WHO, 2011).

and older persons are among those identified as being particularly affected by food insecurity. Climate-induced floods, dry spells and local droughts, as well as loss or disruption of livelihoods due to conflict and violence, and the socioeconomic impact of Covid-19, disproportionality affect households with members with disabilities (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2022c). As the price of food is increasing, its affordability and availability is decreasing. Persons with disabilities often cannot access food security and livelihood opportunities (OCHA, 2022a) due to societal and economic barriers to meeting their basic needs (Humanity & Inclusion [HI], 2021b).

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),[3] persons with disabilities have the right to an adequate standard of living and access to food (article 28), protection and safety, including in humanitarian contexts (article 11) (United Nations, 2022a). As of February 2023, South Sudan is a signatory to the UNCRPD (Light for the World, 2023). Humanitarian actors now have the opportunity to push more strongly for inclusion of persons with disabilities, as governments are obliged to monitor and report on progress in implementing the UNCRPD (World Food Programme [WFP], 2021b). In South Sudan, the UNCRPD is strengthened by, and further strengthens the implementation, of:

- the South Sudan National Disability and Inclusion Policy, adopted in 2015 (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child, Social Welfare, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, 2013); and

- the National Action Plan, adopted in 2020 (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child and Welfare, 2020).

Although adopted in 2015, the National Disability and Inclusion Policy (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child, Social Welfare, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, 2013) suggests actions that are already in line with the ***Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*** (hereinafter referred to as the "IASC Guidelines") and the four recommended "must do" actions (IASC, 2019):

1. promote meaningful participation;

2. remove barriers;

3. empower persons with disabilities; support them to develop their capacities; and

4. disaggregate data for monitoring inclusion

More and more actors have heard of the IASC Guidelines and the four "must do" actions. NGOs and United Nations agencies have started to put in place community groups, which would consult persons with disabilities and DI FPs who monitor progress, in addition to establishing accessible service and distribution points and reaching out to disability-focused organizations for further

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3 The UNCRPD marked a shift from the charity and medical model of disability to a rights-based understanding of disability.

guidance and support. However, skills, knowledge and tools to implement the recommendations of the IASC Guidelines are limited (Funke, 2023).

HI and WFP have networked and collaborated on disability-inclusive programming and operationalizing the IASC Guidelines at the global and country levels in South Sudan over the last four years. They laid the foundation for their collaboration in South Sudan by working together on the Humanitarian and Resilience Programme in South Sudan (HARISS), funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), to strengthen accountability to and protection of affected communities, with a focus on gender, age and disability inclusion (United Kingdom, FCDO, 2022). The programme had a component dedicated to enhancing the disability inclusion of other organizations such as the WFP, through which HI and WFP collaborated between 2019 and 2021 (HI, 2022b). This collaboration included an assessment of the community-based participatory planning process (CBPP) and provided technical support to address specific and pre-identified gaps (HI, 2020).

From July 2021 (with an effective start in August 2021) to February 2022, HI and WFP formalized their new collaboration to make components of WFP programming more inclusive of persons with disabilities and enhance their meaningful participation. A field-level agreement (FLA) was signed between HI and WFP South Sudan to implement a project called "Strengthening the access of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable populations to improved food security and livelihood opportunities and to build their resilience to mitigation shocks in Western Equatoria State, Yambio" (HI, 2022a).

This collaboration included an assessment of barriers, gaps and enablers to food security and livelihood programming in Yambio, Western Equatoria State (WES). The project provided an opportunity for WFP, cooperating partner (CP) staff, the local community, the state Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, the state Ministry of Agriculture and the Union of Persons with Disabilities Yambio to participate in training, sensitization sessions and technical support on mainstreaming disability in humanitarian action (HI, 2021a; HI, 2022a). In total, the project reached 3,021 beneficiaries through different types of activities within a seven-month period (HI, 2022c). The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities was integral throughout the collaboration (HI, 2021a; HI, 2022a).

A participatory lessons learned and good practice report on strengthening the access of persons with disabilities to food security and livelihood opportunities was produced at the end of the project (HI, 2021b). It highlighted the learnings from the seven-month project in Yambio and described good practices of supporting the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and strengthening their representative structures, reducing disability inclusion gaps in programming among WFP and CP staff, and enhancing accountability to affected populations (AAP), community engagement and targeting.

Figure 1 shows the timeline of the project with key activities at the beginning of, during and at the end of the project, as briefly introduced in this chapter and throughout **Chapter 3**.

Figure 1. Key activities and outputs of the seven-month project along the project cycle

Start of the project:
- The project started on 1 August 2021 and ran for seven months

Inception phase:
- Participative barriers and enablers (B&E) assessment (incl. joint validation and prioritization of short- and long-term barriers) in September 2021

During the project implementation:
- Capacity development of 216 staff from WFP, CPs, community leaders, members of the local group of persons with disabilities, and two state ministries
- Empowerment of 220 persons with disabilities through contribution to trainings and participation in financial literacy training
- Mentoring and coaching of 20 disability inclusion focal points
- Participation of 3,565 community members (33 percent persons with disabilities) in awareness-raising sessions
- Monthly coordination and cooperation meetings through state-level Inclusion Working Group

Monitoring:
- 2 review meetings with the line ministry and local group of persons with disabilities
- Observations, 10 monthly inclusion surveys (focus group discussions) with beneficiaries with and without disabilities
- Field monitoring visits by the IHA specialist

Accountability, evaluation and learning:
- Documentation of lessons learned and good practices, including participatory validation workshop
- Project end report
- Evaluation/beneficiary satisfaction survey

End of the project:
- The project ended on 28 February 2022

Source: HI (2021a).

While these experiences revealed what worked well and what required further improvement, this research study aimed to complement this information by analysing which success factors and hindering factors enabled continuity and sustainability of change, and which of these factors may enable replication in another context or scaling up in the same context.

The case study gathered a more in-depth understanding of:

- the changes initiated in WFP's programming to improve accessibility and support meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in food security and livelihood programming;

- key success factors and hindering factors to anchor and maintain the four "must do" actions and the twin-track approach[4] as part of an inclusive programming approach; and

- factors that could foster replication and/or scaling up to operationalize the IASC Guidelines more effectively and ensure meaningful participation.

This case study was funded and supported by the German Federal Foreign Office and its flagship project **Phase 3 - Leave no one behind!** It provided an opportunity for HI and WFP to conduct a joint case study on good and promising practices in disability-inclusive food security and livelihood programming.

Chapter 1 introduces the background of the case study and the seven-month project. **Chapter 2** focuses on methodological aspects of the case study, including the research aim, objectives and questions, the data collection and analysis, and the limitations of this study. The findings are presented in **Chapter 3** and divided into barriers that continue to exist (including those not directly targeted by the project) and the progress that has been maintained along the four "must do" actions, as well as facilitating and hindering factors, divided into collaborative, institutional and contextual factors. **Chapter 4** provides a summary of the findings and **Chapter 5** provides several recommendations to improve/continue, replicate or scale activities.

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4   The twin-track approach, as described in the IASC Guidelines, differentiates between targeted interventions that address specific requirements of persons with disabilities and mainstream interventions that target the whole population, including persons with disabilities (IASC, 2019).

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Description: Gatmai Bol, 33, is a basketball player. The HI livelihood project in the refugee camp in Juba has helped him start a small business charging phones.

2. Methods

In the case study, applied research was used to help both WFP and HI make decisions and plan their future interventions. It used a qualitative and explorative study design to further the understanding of adopting a disability-inclusive food security and livelihood programming approach. That is, to answer questions about "the 'what', 'how' or 'why' of a phenomenon" (Green and Thorogood, 2014, p. 24).

The research process followed a participatory methodology to ensure that the study objective and research questions effectively supported WFP and HI in their work and collaboration. The researcher involved HI South Sudan and WFP regional and South Sudan staff in developing the terms of reference (TOR), the interview list and the guide.

The preliminary findings from the data analysis were shared, discussed with and validated by research participants, including persons with disabilities. Three separate workshops were conducted: one hybrid workshop with key informants without internet access, one hybrid workshop with key informants with internet access and one meeting to share the preliminary findings with the WFP regional bureau and headquarters, and HI technical staff who were involved in developing the case study TOR.

To engage with the study objectives, the researcher was in South Sudan from the end of October to the end of November. She spent two weeks in Yambio town, WES, and two weeks in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

The research team consisted of the lead researcher (a doctoral student at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and technical officer for inclusive humanitarian action at HI). Two HI staff members (a Senior Project Officer and an Inclusive Humanitarian Action Specialist) and a local consultant from Yambio supported the lead researcher. All three were formally involved in different roles during the seven-month project.

The Inclusive Humanitarian Action Specialist provided technical advice to the lead researcher and supported facilitation of the focus group discussions (FGDs), as did the Senior Project Officer, who also supported the logistical preparation and introduction of the researcher to the interviewees. The local consultant assisted the lead researcher in facilitating the meetings with the KII and FGD participants. He also interpreted from English into the local language (Zande) during the FGDs.

2.1 Aim, objectives and research questions

The aim of the case study was to enhance evidence and learning around disability-inclusive food emergency programming in South Sudan.

The study objectives were summarized as follows:

- to enhance understanding of the key success factors (resources such as time, human resources, right entry points and tools) that support the anchoring of a disability-inclusive programming approach to enhance access for and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities; and

- to identify and better understand factors from the collaboration between HI and WFP South Sudan, Yambio and partners in Yambio that enhance the likelihood of sustaining, replicating and/or scaling efforts on disability inclusion in food emergency programming.

Based on the joint development of objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

- What were the **facilitating and success factors** that supported the anchoring of a disability-inclusive programming approach, in line with the "must do" actions and the twin-track approach?

- What were the **hindering factors** that hampered the anchoring of a disability-inclusive programming approach?

- What **recommendations** can be drawn from this analysis for WFP, CPs, HI and other key stakeholders at the community level, such as OPDs and/or community leadership, **on how to sustain, replicate and/or scale activities, or** how **to overcome** factors for future collaborations?

2.2 Data collection

Primary and secondary data were used for this study, as described below. Secondary data was used to contextualize the study and was partly used for content analysis. Documents were publicly available or shared with the researcher.

The primary data from key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs was triangulated with data from the content analysis. Formal and informal observations were not possible due to a limited time plan in Yambio, where the project was implemented, and security incidences in Makpandu refugee camp.

2.2.1 Content analysis

The researcher reviewed relevant (grey) literature, including:

Type of document	Literature
Project reports	• B&E assessment report • Initial interest assessments • Lessons learned and good practices report • Post-intervention monitoring report • Project end report
Main international disability-related and context-specific reference documents	• IASC Guidelines • Humanitarian Disability Charter • United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) • South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overviews • WFP South Sudan Annual Country Report 2022
Guidance and methodological documentation	• WFP Protection and Accountability Handbook • WFP protection guideline on implementation of "alternates" • WFP CBPP guidance for WFP government extension staff and CPs • WFP Guide to Inclusion of Persons with Disability in Food Assistance Programmes • Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for WFP and CPs on prioritization of persons with specific needs during provision of assistance in South Sudan • WFP technical note on Mainstreaming of Disability Disaggregation: A Phased Approach

Type of document	Literature
Organizational policies and strategies	• WFP Gender Policy 2022 • WFP Protection and Accountability Policy 2020 • WFP Community Engagement Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations (2021–2026) • WFP Disability Inclusion Road Map (2020–2022) • WFP Strategic Plan (2022–2025) • WFP Corporate Results Framework (2022–2025) • WFP South Sudan Country Strategic Plan (2023–2025) • South Sudan Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare National Disability and Inclusion Policy • South Sudan Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare National Disability Action Plan

In total, 41 documents were reviewed. Of them, 23 were used for the content analysis,[5] and the others were mainly used for background reading and preparation of the KIIs and FGDs. The documents of the content analysis were reviewed using a summative method, as described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). This means that the researcher explored if and how disability (inclusion), as described in the IASC Guidelines, was stated therein. Where the term "disab" appeared, the researcher took a closer look at whether the document reflected the human rights-based understanding of disability and if/to what extend the "must do" actions were reflected.

2.2.2 Semi-structured key informant interviews and focus group discussions

For the KIIs, HI and WFP were asked to provide a list of and facilitate first contact with possible key informants. Interviewees were selected based on their participation in or active contribution to the seven-month project, their area of expertise and affiliation to an organization. In the KIIs, there was no gender balance, while in the FGDs, there was a different representation of gender and persons with different disabilities.

The purpose of the KIIs was to explore collaborative, institutional and contextual factors that facilitated or hindered the continuation of a disability-inclusive programming approach, as well as to identify practices that continued after the end of the project and that could be replicated in other projects or in the same context.

The FGDs complemented and triangulated the information from the KIIs and the content analysis to see where there was a common perspective and where opinions differed. The questions covered in the FGDs were adapted and shortened versions of those already explored in the individual

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5   Some documents were double-counted as background information and considered in the content analysis.

interviews. This was due to time constraints, as the questions and answers had to be translated into the local language.

The KIIs lasted 45 to 60 minutes. In total, 17 interviews were conducted with 19 interlocutors, including:

- representatives of HI (three interviews, with one male and two female interviewees) and WFP (four interviews, with two female and three male interviewees);

- representatives of international, national, and local non-governmental disability mainstream organizations (five interviews, with six male interviewees);

- local government officials (two interviews, with two male interviewees), and representative of a governmental agency (one interview, with one male interviewee); and

- local group of persons with disabilities (one interview, with one male interviewee), and international OPD representative (one interview, with one male interviewee).

The FGDs lasted from one-and-a-half to two hours. FGDs were conducted:

- three FGDs with community leaders from Yambio County: 1) FGD with three female and four male participants, 2) FGD with one female and five male participants and 3) FGD with two male and three female participants;

- one FGD with members from the local group of persons with disabilities who mainly identified as having a physical disability (three male and three female participants); and

- one FGD with disability inclusion focal points (DI FPs) from different organizations and state ministries (four female and three male participants).

2.3 Data analysis

For the secondary data, an analysis grid was used to define the number of times "disab" or the abbreviation "PWD" (meaning "person with a disability")[6] appeared in the document, and to analyse where the text had a human rights-based understanding of disability, or referred to any of the "must do" actions and/or the twin-track approach.

The primary data was analysed in a mainly deductive manner, looking at hindering and facilitating factors, subcoded by collaborative, institutional and contextual factors. In addition, the promising practices that were continued and considered replicable and/or foundational by participants were deductively derived from the four "must do" actions of the IASC Guidelines. These were cross-referenced with the B&Es identified at the project's beginning, the activities implemented during the project and the good and promising practices identified at the project's end.

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6   The content analysis also considered the abbreviation "PWD", even though according to the IASC Guidelines, the acronym should be avoided due to stigma and discrimination, and is not rights-based language (IASC, 2019).

Data was analysed using NVivo 20 software (QSR International, 2022).

2.4 Limitations

Although the data is specific to the WFP-HI collaboration and to the context of WES, South Sudan, and is therefore not representative of other regions in South Sudan, it provides good insight into promising practices and influential factors that led to the continuation or discontinuation of activities.

During the coding process and the write-up, the researcher found many overlaps in the categories chosen for this research. For example, the "must do" actions mentioned in the IASC Guidelines strongly influence each other. Therefore, it was sometimes difficult to assign the results to only one category/must do action. In addition, some of the barriers originally identified and still existing could be influenced or reduced, or pertain to, all four "must do" actions. For example, stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Yambio are categorized as attitudinal barriers. These barriers are identified through quality (quantitative and qualitative) data on disability. Discrimination poses a challenge to meaningful participation. It is therefore important to reduce misconceptions about persons with disabilities through capacity development of humanitarian organizations, the Ministries and the local community, and to empower persons with disabilities by informing them of their right to participate in society on an equal basis.

Lastly, and as highlighted previously, it was not possible to further validate the research findings through formal observations during the research stay due to time and security constraints.

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Description: A sensibilization workshop on the rights of persons with disabilities, Yei, South Sudan.

3. Findings

A B&E assessment was conducted at the beginning of the seven-month project in WES, in Bazunga, Gangura, Rirangu, Yambio, Makpandu refugee camp and a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Riimenze. The objectives of this were to:

- identify barriers that prevent persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups from accessing food security, nutrition and livelihood programmes financed (and partly directly implemented) by WFP;

- identify the capacities of WFP and CP staff at the programme and service levels on disability inclusion; and

- explore possible entry points and establish methods and modalities for capacity building.

HI conducted the assessment together with persons with disabilities from the local community. This involved quantitative data-collection methods using the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning or Washington Group Questions (WGQs) and qualitative data through KIIs and FGDs, including with persons with and without disabilities from the community, WFP, CPs and state ministries. Observations were also carried out.

Some of the initially identified barriers, more of which are discussed in the following subchapters, include stigmatization within the community and among humanitarian NGOs (attitudinal barriers), lack of access to information (communication barriers), long distances to distribution points (physical barriers) and lack of adaptation of services and activities for persons with disabilities (institutional barriers).

Some of the enablers shared in the assessment concerned provision of mobility devices, changes of service hours, accessible information on reporting protection incidents and human rights violations, reimbursement for transport to get to the delivery point and transparent registration processes.

Some of the good practices identified were around:

- **Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) programmes:** prioritizing families with members with disabilities for FFA programmes, including identification of an individual chosen by the person with a disability who can work on their behalf; one organization already had two farmers with visual impairments included in their agricultural programmes;

- **health services:** addressing specific needs of children with disabilities in health services, e.g., home visits by community volunteers, training on referral mechanisms for community volunteers, psychosocial support for persons with disabilities;

- **reasonable accommodation:** training for food monitors who ensure that persons who need to be served first are identified and can enter the "do fast" queue; another United Nations agency has dedicated persons who can do outreach; and

- **information, feedback and complaint mechanisms:** holding pre-distribution meetings with community leaders for them to pass on information to their community members, having help desks for general food distribution (GFD) sites for persons who can access the site and toll-free hotlines to share feedback.

In addition to good practices, the assessment also identified numerous opportunities and entry points:

- **partner training:** integrating a module on disability and inclusion into existing training that is conducted quarterly by WFP with partners;

- **monitoring:** monitoring inclusion of persons with disabilities through the monthly activity progress and the post-distribution monitoring reporting; and

- **coordination and partnerships:** enhancing the outreach work of the state Ministry of Agriculture's extension workers because of the good working relationship between WFP, CPs and the Ministry; using the existing coordination group formed by the state Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare; and building on the willingness of different state and non-state actors to enhance inclusion of persons with disabilities in access to food.

The information on barriers, best practices and entry points was validated, categorized and prioritized by WFP, CPs, one of the state ministries and members of the Union of People with Disabilities in Yambio. In this way, all partners decided in a participatory manner which barriers should be addressed and how this should be done in the short term, during the project and in the long term after the project's end (HI, 2021a).

The assessment itself was one of the good practices identified at the project's end. It was intended to help the WFP and CP identify opportunities and solutions to the barriers identified in the assessment, to increase uptake and to prioritize the removal of barriers in the short and long term. The assessment was also a baseline and a good starting point for the seven-month project and the activities carried out in it to improve WFP and CP programming (HI, 2022a).

Chapter 3 compares the initially identified barriers, enablers and opportunities with the activities and good practices implemented during the seven-month project. It assesses which of them have been maintained after the project's completion and have the potential to be replicated or expanded to further reduce existing barriers.

3.1 Remaining barriers

The seven-month project addressed several barriers and used opportunities and entry points that had been jointly identified at the beginning of the project. Given the length of the project and the prioritization of certain barriers, it was not possible to work on all barriers, including the longer-term ones, at once. The project evaluation (HI, 2022c) and the interviews for this research therefore identified some risks and barriers that (still) exist and can serve as a basis for future action.[7]

3.1.1 Attitudinal barriers

The project has shown that community awareness sessions are necessary and have real benefits in terms of reducing stigma and discrimination within the community, including within families with members with disabilities, as emphasized by community leaders in all three FGDs and persons with disabilities alike. This is crucial because, as other research has pointed out, society views persons with disabilities as a burden on their families rather than active contributors to society (South Sudan Association of the Visually Impaired, 2016; Funke, 2023,). It is also essential because organizations mobilize beneficiaries through local community structures (National non-governmental organization [NNGO], 2022; United Nations, 2022b), and misperceptions about what persons with disabilities can and cannot do impede their access to income-generating activities (Community leaders, 2022; Local group of persons with disabilities [LGPD], 2022a).

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7   Please note this is not an exhaustive list, and that the research objective was not to emanate a B&F assessment.

Some interviewees from international and national NGOs in Yambio still view persons with disability as unable to participate in asset-building activities. A project coordinator from a disability-mainstreaming NGO explained:

> "If the person with disability can produce their own food, the person can produce it themselves. However, there is also still the perception that persons with disabilities cannot work 15 days in a month, and that it is 'easier' to have someone working on their behalf."
>
> Project coordinator of an NGO

However, stigma and discrimination against persons with different disabilities has not been reduced equally for all, and some are more at risk of being left behind or exposed to gender-based violence than others. For example, the B&E assessment identified that persons with psychosocial disabilities were left out of communication about food distribution plans and discriminated against (HI, 2021a). This is also highlighted by another assessment, the intersectoral needs assessment conducted across 75 counties in South Sudan, which highlighted that persons with psychosocial disabilities are particularly excluded from distribution,[8] since they are not informed in time and access to the distribution point is difficult (OCHA, 2022b). According to other research on South Sudan (Funke and Dijkzeul, 2021) and two representatives of persons with disabilities working at the local and national levels, persons with "invisible" (i.e. psychosocial and intellectual) disabilities are still overlooked by the humanitarian community. They are not represented and thus do not have the same access to decision making processes and programmes as persons with visual, physical or hearing disabilities. In addition, women with disabilities reported cases of other women with disabilities or women with children with disabilities being sexually assaulted and then left alone with their child. No specific reference was made to accessing protection services, however, due to limited financial resources and lack of access to livelihood opportunities, they struggle to meet their basic needs, find appropriate housing or send their child(ren) to school.

Extending (community) awareness-raising events to other locations will therefore reduce stigma and discrimination within the community, families and governmental/non-governmental food security actors. Ultimately, this will affect whether and to what extent persons with disabilities are targeted, consulted and actively involved in decision making, programming and projects, as highlighted by persons with disabilities.

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8   The type of distribution is not specified.

"So her message is going to all the partners we've trained and the WFP, the donor, that at least let them make inclusion a priority. That is her message to all the CPs and WFP, during planning and decision making, that they should involve them in all their programmes. That is her message."

Women with a disability from the FGD with persons with disabilities (interpreted from Zande to English)

3.1.2 Environmental barriers

Community leaders and persons with disabilities shared that some barriers remain. The lack of access to food for children, women, persons with disabilities and older people remains a problem due to the distance of the distribution point, the lack of a support person and the need for an assistive device or outreach service. These barriers were not addressed during the seven-month project and require longer-term solutions.

Persons with disabilities also expressed that even if they or their support person reach the registration point and the food is collected, this does not immediately result in the person with disabilities receiving the (full) support, being able to take their food rations home safely or being registered to receive the service at all. Community leaders noted that while family members and support persons can also act as enablers, persons with disabilities rely on them to collect food rations or cash vouchers on their behalf. As persons with disabilities shared, without any awareness-raising, this can also lead to unequal distribution of assistance within families. According to an international non-governmental organization (INGO), this might be particularly problematic in the case of unconditional cash assistance. Once the entitlement has been granted, it is the responsibility of the so-called "alternate" to collect the entitlement and transfer it to the person with a disability.[9]

The lack of access to assistive devices, such as tricycles for persons with mobility difficulties or white canes for persons who are blind, makes it even more difficult for them to physically access food distribution points. This was highlighted not only in the post-intervention monitoring report (HI, 2022c), but also by a representative of persons with disabilities and multiple community leaders after the end of the project. This further hinders their equal participation in society and unnecessarily increases their dependency on social and family networks (Funke, 2023).

Community leaders and members of the local group of persons with disabilities pointed out that considerable work has already been done via awareness-raising activities on use of more rights-based language and diversification of communication channels. However, access to information for persons with intellectual, psychosocial and hearing disabilities remains limited, as shared by a

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9   An alternate is an individual appointed by the person who cannot register or receive food themselves to register or collect the entitlement on their behalf. WFP has developed a protection guideline on using alternates (WFP, 2019a).

representative of the local group of persons with disabilities and a community representative with a family member with a psychosocial disability, among others. A person with a hearing impairment recommended that it would be helpful to repeat and/or continue training on, for example, the basics of sign language interpretation, as people would otherwise forget it.

3.1.3 Institutional barriers

This chapter describes some existing institutional barriers that still discriminate against persons with disabilities.

Some policies that support mainstreaming disability in food security and livelihood programming are described in the findings **chapter 3.3.2.2**. However, reviewing and adapting the tools to implement these measures required support beyond the pilot project. For example, to follow the Community Engagement Strategy (WFP, 2021e) and the Protection and Accountability Policy (WFP, 2020), it is necessary to adapt the criteria for beneficiary selection and ensure that persons with disabilities are also taken into account (HI, 2022c; United Nations, 2022b). A promising example mentioned in WFP's South Sudan Annual Country Report is the revision of the project management committee (PMC) policy, code of conduct and TOR, which will ensure participation that is more meaningful and representation of persons with disabilities in PMCs (WFP, 2023b).

As highlighted in all interviews and FGDs, as well as in previous project reports, the lack of disability disaggregated data and the incompleteness of existing data is a key shortcoming in promoting disability inclusion (HI, 2022c). Almost all interviewees and beneficiaries of the seven-month project, whether governmental organizations or NGOs, DI FPs, community leaders or people with disabilities, confirmed that they recognize persons with disabilities by their appearance and behaviour. Not only does this increase the risk of primarily identifying persons with physical or visual disabilities, but it is also not in line with the IASC Guidelines and WFP-specific guidelines[10] and policies. These recommend use of the WGQs,[11] which provide comparable, disaggregated data that is collected in a non-discriminatory manner and can be feasibly added to surveys (IASC, 2019). Therefore, persons with Down syndrome and persons with a combined vision and hearing impairment (i.e. persons with deafblindness or cerebral palsy) are often neglected in terms of identification and targeted support (OPD, 2022). The collection, analysis and use of data on disability remains an urgent issue, as local state and non-state actors have limited capacity and resources to collect data on disability across the state (INGO, 2022a; LGPD, 2022b; State government, 2022). However, and as mentioned by the chairperson of the local group of persons with disabilities, "[t]he lack of data is not a justification for excluding people with disabilities!", neither for state nor for non-state actors (LGPD, 2022b).

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10   For example, *Mainstreaming of Disability Disaggregation: A Phased Approach* (WFP, 2021a), the WFP Protection and Accountability Policy 2020 (WFP, 2020), and the WFP *Protection and Accountability Handbook* (WFP, 2021b).

11   The WGQs consist of six questions about persons' difficulties with basic functioning activities. They concern vision, hearing, mobility, cognition (remembering), self-care and communication and can be directed to persons aged 5 and above (Washington Group on Disability Statistics, 2022).

As highlighted by inclusive humanitarian action experts, in addition to quantitative disaggregated data, more qualitative data is needed. Collecting data on barriers, enablers and capacities helps with programming that addresses barriers and thereby decreases the impact of barriers on food outcomes, as disaggregation alone is not enough. Further, more evidence is needed on disability-related additional costs (INGO, 2022a). In unconditional cash programmes, households with members with disabilities receive the same amount of food or cash as other households. Some food security actors shared that they do not distinguish in GFD and would consider it discriminatory to give more to a particular household. However, recent research shows that households experience extra costs related to having members with disabilities. These costs depend on the severity of disability, the household composition and size (smaller households or those where a person with a disability lives alone tend to have higher costs), and lifecycle (Mitra and others, 2017). Costs relate to support persons, assistive devices, medical care and transportation and, if not considered, can further affect the socioeconomic status of the person or the household. Therefore, additional cash (and in-kind) benefits can account for extra disability-related costs (Mont and others, 2022). Yet, more research is required, especially in low- and middle-income countries (Mitra and others, 2017), including in crisis settings, as highlighted by one interviewee from HI.

A distinct institutional barrier that was shared by members of the local group of persons with disabilities is the limited technical capacity of staff from food security actors to ensure consultation of persons with disabilities throughout the humanitarian project cycle. Their involvement beyond the project design and their active participation in decision making seems problematic. As explained by an OPD representative working at the national and regional level in East Africa, the fact that disability inclusion is seen as "box-ticking" remains a widespread problem among humanitarian actors. Humanitarian organizations in South Sudan feel that they must design specific projects for persons with disabilities or cover a specific aspect of inclusion, rather than taking a mainstreaming approach in their programmes. The project used existing opportunities and entry points identified in the B&E assessment to improve inclusion of persons with disabilities in food security programming, rather than taking an all-at-once approach. It highlighted what is possible in the short term and what requires longer-term and successive measures so that the inclusion of people with disabilities is ultimately not just a "narrow aspect" of programming but instead mainstreamed, as described in the following quote:

> "Now we see that issues of disability could be considered in one narrow aspect of [a] programme, which I believe that it is not really disability inclusion, but it is an attempt to be disability inclusive."
>
> OPD representative

As shown by other research, there are hardly any OPDs outside the capital city of Juba (Funke, 2023). Therefore, in the South Sudan context, humanitarian actors rely much more on individuals with disabilities from the affected population and informal local groups of persons with disabilities (Funke and Dijkzeul, 2021). In the context of Yambio, not being officially registered or having a constitution creates challenges. As highlighted by members of the group, they do not have their own

safe space to gather and conduct activities, their own financial resources to cover transportation, or mobile phones or refreshments costs to hold meetings or sensitization sessions. Further, as highlighted by an OPD representative, existing formal and informal groups might not represent the heterogeneity of persons with different disabilities. For example, Inclusion International, which has a mandate to support and promote the equal participation of persons with disabilities and their families in society, does not have a member in South Sudan (Inclusion International, 2023).

3.2 Maintaining progress on disability inclusion

The seven-month project has shown what can be achieved in a short timeframe and with a participatory approach to needs assessment, design, implementation and follow-up of a project. The findings from **section 3.2.1** show the importance of consistency and continuity and describe the process from the initial barriers identified, through the implementation of activities, to the promising practices identified at the end of the seven-month project, which continued beyond this period. It is structured along the four "must do" actions and provides recommendations from research participants of how to further improve practices and programming. Section 3.2.1 also highlights some of the policies, guidance and strategic plans that are available on disability inclusion and/or that mainstream disability, which were analysed in the desk review and are in line with the "must do" actions.

3.2.1 Promoting meaningful participation

During an oral update to WFP's Executive Board in February 2023, WFP identified consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations as a key achievement. In the same update, WFP highlighted that the entity is "approaching"[12] the requirements for indicator 5 of the United Nations Strategy on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, i.e. consultation with persons with disabilities (WFP, 2023a), in 2021 and 2022. According to the UNDIS accountability framework, this indicator is met if the United Nations agency systematically consults and involves persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. In addition, there must be guidelines in place that address consultation of a diverse representation of persons with disabilities, take into account intersectional aspects and provide guidance on making consultation processes accessible (United Nations, 2019).

While the United Nations has published a specific guideline on consulting persons with disabilities in 2021 to comply with indicator 5 (United Nations, 2021), the content analysis showed that WFP provides its employees and CPs with a specific guidance note on consulting persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. The guidance is based on the aforementioned UNDIS guideline, in line with the WFP Protection and Accountability Policy and the WFP Community Engagement Strategy. It is rooted in the IASC Guidelines and was created in consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. It provides

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12 The rating system consists of five levels: 1) exceeds requirements, 2) meets requirements, 3) approaches requirements, 4) missing and 5) not applicable (United Nations, 2019).

practical advice and good practices from other countries on how to consult OPDs to review strategies, contribute to programming and be consulted as employees (WFP, 2022a).

Promoting meaningful participation of persons with disabilities is one of the "must do" actions (IASC, 2019), and is crucial for the implementation of WFP's Disability Inclusion Road Map and subsequent workplans. Therefore, it is also reflected as a cross-cutting topic in other guidelines and strategies. For example, the *Protection and Accountability Handbook* highlights the importance of ensuring equal participation of persons with disabilities, in order to be accountable to affected populations (WFP, 2021). The Community Engagement Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations has identified four main areas of decision making at the community, field implementation, response leadership and global governance levels. Particularly at the community level, the engagement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations is emphasized. The strategy states that community involvement is particularly important in the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation/monitoring of projects (WFP, 2021e). In line with the aforementioned strategy, the technical note *Mainstreaming of Disability Disaggregation: A Phased Approach* highlights the importance of engaging persons with different disabilities and representatives from OPDs in community-based targeting approaches, by including them in beneficiary selection committees (WFP, 2021a).

The project itself followed a very participatory approach. Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities was ensured throughout the project, as highlighted by almost all interviewees and confirmed by the FGDs with DI FPs and persons with disabilities.

Members of the local group of persons with disabilities were engaged:

- as project staff;

- as co-facilitators for awareness-raising sessions to the local community and for (refresher) training sessions to WFP CPs and DI FPs;

- as enumerators for the B&E assessment;

- in coordination mechanisms; and

- in monthly feedback surveys (HI, 2021b; HI, 2022a).

As former project staff and members of the local disability group reported, HI worked with them to promote equal participation of people with disabilities in the community. A specialist shared that they had ownership of the community awareness-raising activities and would be the ones leading the activity. The sensitization sessions introduced the topic of inclusion of persons with disabilities, equality and non-discrimination.

The local group also confirmed that they had learned a lot from HI's guidance and collaboration during the project. In addition, several interviewees from national and international CPs and the local group representative confirmed that this had sustainably increased their visibility and boosted not only their confidence, but also the confidence of humanitarian actors in working with the chairperson of the local group of persons with disabilities.

> "So slowly, slowly by slowly, it is a small change is going through the work which was done by HI before. That's the reason why some of the partners are calling me, [to say] let us do this with them, together."
>
> Chairperson of the local group of persons with disabilities

For it to be successful, it was important to assess their confidence and capacities jointly. This then guided the training that was needed to inform them about their rights and to build their confidence to speak up in public meetings and sessions (HI, 2021b).

Their active engagement had a lasting impact. According to the chairperson of the local group of persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities now participate more frequently in the activities of WFP and CPs. This highlights the importance of working with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations on the ground to prevent humanitarian aid from not reaching them (OPD, 2022). Multiple examples were shared with the researcher and are summarized in figure 2.

For example, the DI FPs emphasized that they now foster meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in their meetings.[13] A representative of an international OPD and the director of a national OPD further highlighted that WFP, at the capital level, ensured that persons with disabilities were invited to their training sessions. For example, as part of WFP's responsibility to chair the South Sudan Gender and Inclusion Roadmap Team in 2022, WFP organized a two-day training session on gender equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities for its members, including for OPDs (WFP, 2023b).

Several key informants stated that WFP CPs ensure that at least two out of ten seats on their PMCs are reserved for people with different disabilities and of different genders. Three different cooperation partners indicated that the PMC has multiple roles, including assisting in the identification of needs and risks, facilitating consultations and mobilizing in the preparation of proposals.

Further, WFP and national cooperation partners reconfirmed what had already been identified in the B&E assessment (HI, 2021a), namely that people with disabilities are part of some cooperative groups for smallholder agriculture market support (SAMS) and FFA programmes and participate in microsavings groups together with people without disabilities to support each other.

At the community level, community leaders shared that they meaningfully include persons with disabilities in community consultations, e.g. to settle disputes, which was confirmed by the chairperson of the local persons with disabilities. According to him, information is shared more regularly and participation in community meetings has increased as stigma and discrimination have decreased. However, in the FGDs, community leaders also acknowledged that it is difficult to systematically and always ensure meaningful participation and representation of persons with different disabilities due to lack of financial resources to ensure accessibility and provide reasonable accommodation.

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13   The type of meetings was not specified.

Figure 2. Promising examples of meaningful participation

	Engagement in meetings and training sessions of humanitarian INGOs/NNGOs	Consultation and participation in commuity meetings and for handling disputes
Participation and representation in inclusion working group	Participation and representation in PMCs	
	Participation in FFA and SAMS projects	Participation in loan groups

To continue efforts and make sustainable progress in promoting and ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, the participants in the FGDs and KIIs provided some valuable recommendations:

- Increase the representation of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities by first identifying them, then empowering them to know their own rights, and finally supporting them to form a representative group (INGO, 2022a; OPD, 2022).

- Ensure access and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in farmer groups trained by NGOs (State government, 2022).

- Encourage other persons with disabilities to participate in project activities by employing staff with disabilities (Community leaders, 2022).

- Map OPDs and informal groups of persons with disabilities who have the capacity to be consulted and be engaged in project activities (United Nations, 2022b).

3.2.2 Removing barriers

As previously highlighted, HI conducted a B&E assessment at the beginning of the seven-month project. The assessment showed that 15 percent of persons with disabilities have difficulty accessing services due to discrimination, with 20 percent even reporting verbal and physical violence when trying to access services in the past. Persons with psychosocial disabilities were particularly discriminated against by community members and leaders. Further, the majority of women and persons with disabilities reported that they were not consulted about any type of

service or activity offered in the community (HI, 2021a). The results were not only used for joint priority setting and activity development, but also served as an evidence base during the activities. For example, to advocate for meaningful participation and improved access to food security programmes (HI, 2021b).

3.2.2.1 Decreasing discrimination and stigmatization

The good practice report has already shown that the perception of persons with disabilities in the community has changed for the better. They now speak for themselves and from their own experience. Throughout and after the project, persons with disabilities have been very effective advocates for reducing attitudinal barriers, i.e. stigma and discrimination, as several key informants, community leaders and DI FPs pointed out. Persons with disabilities were able to convince other stakeholders, including government officials, to improve, develop and implement disability-inclusive policies (HI, 2021b). For example, in the interview with the state Ministry of Agriculture, the interviewee mentioned that they had started working with the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster to develop a guide on how to make seed and farm equipment distribution more disability-inclusive and accessible. In the post-monitoring evaluation report, OPDs shared that they had noticed a change in perception and attitude towards persons with disabilities among NGOs providing services. This led to better consideration and prioritization (HI, 2022c).

Progress in reducing attitudinal barriers continued after the end of the project. The DI FPs shared that the training had a lasting impact on their awareness to engage persons with disabilities from the target communities in their programmes. HI technical staff made a similar observation, reporting that the DI FPs' perception of the ability of persons with disabilities to work and earn an income had changed. One person with disabilities confirmed this observation and further shared that the capacity development had increased their confidence to interact directly with persons with disabilities rather than relying on a family member.

Community leaders continued to note a decrease in stigma and discrimination in the community, but also in families with members with disabilities. Several key informants, including the representative of the local group of persons with disabilities, affirmed that there is greater recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities and that a more rights-based language is now also used within the community. Despite these changes, most key informants and focus group participants agreed that sensitization sessions need to be continued and expanded to other locations, which requires more time and financial resources.

> "HI create[d] a source of very good advice to the people, to the community, both sides, advice to the people with disability and advice also to the people, the entire community. So that people may be in one group, not to be in separation. The majority of the people understood and they start also to improve a bit, but still, it needs a long time to continue on advising, advising people."
>
> Member of the local group of persons with disabilities

3.2.2.2 Improving access to services, information, communication and feedback and complaint mechanisms

The B&E assessment identified that 64 percent of persons with disabilities were unable to access basic services due to lack of information. Therefore, persons with disabilities were unaware of available food and livelihood opportunities, and could not engage in consultative meetings or needs assessments. 57 percent of respondents also highlighted the lack of economic resources for reaching information centres, due to distance, which was reported as a challenge by 69 percent of respondents (HI, 2021). Further, the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) highlighted that among other counties, in Yambio County, host community members reported a lack of channels for providing feedback and complaints (OCHA, 2022b).

Some facilitating factors to improve the information flow were using the PMCs or communicating through community and church leaders, who would also be able to receive feedback and complaints from persons with disabilities. However, this would not be the preferred option for persons with psychosocial disabilities, who mentioned it as a challenge to receive information through community leaders only, which demonstrated the importance of diversifying communication channels (HI, 2021a; HI, 2021b). Receiving feedback through the community feedback mechanisms is key, as they are an opportunity to identify and address barriers faced by persons with disabilities. However, for that it is also key that those mechanisms are inclusive and accessible (WFP, 2021a).

Therefore, the project provided different sets of training on inclusive communication and the basics of sign language interpretation for WFP and CP staff, representatives from the state Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and the local group of persons with disabilities. The training allowed participants not only to learn about different communication channels but also about rights-based language, in line with the UNCRPD (HI, 2022a). Even though it would be helpful to repeat basic training in sign language, as the number of sign language interpreters in South Sudan is low, in many cases, family members, caregivers or social workers act as interpreters or translators for persons with disabilities, and are able to explain the person's entitlements (INGO, 2022b; Funke, 2023).

After the project was completed, some of the communication channels identified earlier in the project continued to be used or were expanded (Community leaders, 2022; DI FP, 2022). Community leaders are sharing more information with persons with disabilities in their community and try to monitor whether they have access to the services that they have provided information on. Announcements about humanitarian assistance continued to be disseminated through churches and PMCs. The latter is now more inclusive of persons with disabilities and can disseminate information widely and in different locations, as two WFP CPs pointed out. Further, one partner organization highlighted that the PMCs account for concerns raised by persons with disabilities (HI, 2022c).

Training for WFP and CPs on how to make AAP mechanisms more inclusive and accessible and monthly feedback sessions with persons with disabilities during the project were reported as being valuable for CPs (HI, 2021b; INGO, 2022b). Four of the implementing partners reported that they had involved the local group of persons with disabilities in providing feedback as part

of the post-distribution monitoring. They had set up a help desk at the project sites to forward complaints to the relevant stakeholders, as well as a toll-free hotline, with the former being tested for physical accessibility (INGO, 2022a). A promising example was given by a national NGO that (based on feedback) had implemented an ox-ploughing project involving persons with disabilities. In addition, WFP staff pointed out that feedback mechanisms in the refugee setting are relatively straightforward and that people with disabilities were observed in the food/cash distribution queues (United Nations, 2022b).

The B&E assessment also highlighted the limited consideration given to persons with disabilities in accessing distribution points and the limited resources allocated to reasonable accommodation. As a result, persons with disabilities and those without were lined up together, the distribution point was too far away or outreach services were not provided. When people with disabilities did access seed distribution points, the tools were not adapted to their specific needs, e.g. for persons with physical disabilities (HI, 2021a).

Therefore, the training and technical support provided to WFP, CPs, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare provided an opportunity to better understand the barriers faced by persons with disabilities and what actions can be taken to remove them (HI, 2022a). HI worked with persons with disabilities to advocate for measures to improve the accessibility of distribution sites and centres by considering global accessibility standards and guidelines (HI, 2021b).

According to the post-intervention assessment, WFP had reported that 60 percent of persons with disabilities were able to access their services, which was achieved by putting in place accessibility measures such as printed posters with large writing or allocating a separate line for persons with disabilities. Three organizations also shared that they set up an outreach service and transported goods to households with members with disabilities or transported their goods to markets and inaccessible areas through feeder roads. Two organizations also highlighted that they had adapted their modalities and supported households with persons with disabilities in subsistence farming by adapting their farming equipment for their members with disabilities (HI, 2022c).

Best practices from the seven-month project were maintained. Three CPs shared in the KIIs that they had further applied their knowledge and made reasonable accommodations for the cash and food distribution points. For example, priorities were set so that persons with physical disabilities did not have to wait in line, and sign language interpreters were used for persons who were deaf or hard of hearing. This was also confirmed in the FGD with the DI FPs. An international NGO also pointed out that it was supported by the PMC in determining the best time for distribution and location to set up waiting areas and clearly indicate where the service can be accessed to also avoid protection risks. Another CP further explained that his organization would visit different households in FFA programmes to identify assets and inform persons with disabilities about the reasonable accommodation put in place. This is significant, as WFP's Gender Policy calls for identification and provision of targeted interventions for women farmers with and without disabilities, including through its smallholder farmer programmes, to enable them to access, own and control agricultural inputs (WFP, 2022e).

Lastly, revamping the Western Equatoria Inclusion Working Group monthly meeting to coordinate and share information on the barriers, risks faced by and capacities of persons with disabilities in accessing services, supported pooling resources and improving the existing referral mechanisms (HI, 2021b; LNGO, 2022). The aim of the group was to provide an update on where and on what each organization is currently operating, based on which a "3Ws" (who, where, what) mapping matrix was developed. It was led by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, together with local group of persons with disabilities (HI, 2022a). HI and a local disability-focused organization supported the group (LNGO, 2022) and stakeholders from mental health and psychosocial support, rehabilitation and food security and livelihoods participated in it (HI, 2021b). Even though the working group did not continue on a regular basis but only met for specific events such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, it supported direct interactions with representatives from the local group of persons with disabilities (HI, 2022a; LNGO, 2022).

3.2.2.3 Increasing internal technical capacity

The B&E assessment had identified some short and long-term barriers. While the project focused mainly on the short-term barriers, e.g. to provide sensitization and training to staff, to identify DI FPs or to revamp the Western Equatoria Inclusion Working Group, work on some longer-term barriers was started but requires further attention, including:

- adopting a disability-inclusive data-collection process, including integrating the WGQs into existing data-collection tools and conducting regular B&E assessments;

- monitoring and evaluating disability inclusion in WFP and CPs' programmes with adequate tools, for instance B&E assessments, indictors and evaluation criteria; and

- adopting a strategy to mainstream disability into various programmes, tools and SOPs, for instance to improve accessibility of nutrition centres and GFD points, increase outreach services or ensure an inclusive work environment (HI, 2021a).

Given the duration of the project, it was only possible to work on shorter-term barriers, which were addressed through training and one-to-one meetings with various partners on specific challenges raised during the training sessions. For example, HI provided technical advice to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and held a session for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) teams of various organizations on beneficiary targeting and mobilization, as well as a session with the DI FPs on their role and on inclusive project cycle management (HI, 2022a). The training sessions enabled DI FPs to improve registration processes to better include persons with disabilities (DI FP, 2022), and to address some the issues, or flag them to their superiors (OPD, 2022). HI also supported WFP and CPs to include content from the training in their (internal) trainings, e.g. on inclusive communication and feedback mechanisms, as well as to include content on equality and non-discrimination in their community awareness-raising sessions. This was important due to the high turnover of (front-line) staff (HI, 2021b).

In addition, HI provided the training participants with an initial understanding of disability data collection. Although the training was only an initial introduction and did not provide in-depth knowledge on the use of the WGQs, HI emphasized the importance of collecting quantitative

and qualitative data using the WGQs and assessing B&Es. This was also demonstrated by the relevance of the B&E assessment at the beginning of the project, which proved to be a good starting point to address some of the barriers, specific needs, risks and capacities of persons with disabilities. It also allowed WFP and CPs to undertake needs-based food security and livelihood planning that also considers specific reasonable accommodation needs (HI, 2021b; INGO, 2022a). At the same time, as highlighted by WFP and a CP, it is important to consider monitoring disability inclusion in their regular monitoring reports, too.

3.2.2.4 Recommendations on removing barriers

In addition to some of the above-mentioned recommendations for removing barriers, research participants made the following valuable suggestions:

- Extend the community awareness sessions also to other more rural areas (Community leaders, 2022; INGO, 2022a), as highlighted by one community leader.

> "So, that training helped them, it opened their eyes and their minds now, because they know what are the hindrances to accessibility to any services. So, what he's saying is, it is important for this training to continue. If you can look for another donor to fund this project to continue so that it reaches far *payams* [administrative units] and other places, at least there will be change. Because for people within town, here, they have basic knowledge now about disability inclusion."
>
> Community leader

- Review some of the existing policies, tools and systems, e.g. reviewing the feedback and complaint mechanism (United Nations, 2022b), employment opportunities or doing a disability audit of existing referral mechanisms (INGO, 2022a).

- Strengthen collection of disability data in the whole country so that it can inform planning and programme design (United Nations, 2022b).

- Collaborate with persons with disabilities and OPDs to identify sign language interpreters, and to verify whether information is accessible (OPD, 2022).

3.2.3 Empowering persons with disabilities and continuing to develop capacities

In the B&E assessment, implementing partners noted that there was limited knowledge on the rights of persons with disabilities and experience in considering disability inclusion in a systematic manner (HI, 2021a). Therefore, the project provided capacity development opportunities for WFP, its CPs, community leaders and two state ministries, and trained a total of 216 people. The training content was adapted to the food and livelihood sector. It primarily targeted front-line staff, as well as some management and strategic-level staff. Community leaders were trained as key stakeholders

in CBPPs, in the selection/identification of the most vulnerable persons in their community and in information-sharing. The training sessions for community leaders were conducted together with persons with disabilities as co-facilitators who provided community leaders with an introduction to disability, including an understanding of B&Es, increased risks of some groups and inclusive communication (HI, 2022a).

As already highlighted in **Section 3.2.1**, the participation and co-facilitation of awareness-raising sessions had empowered persons with disabilities to conduct the sessions themselves (LGPD, 2022b). Especially because the number of OPD involved in humanitarian activities is limited outside the capital of South Sudan, the involvement and capacity development of the local group of persons with disabilities in the project was crucial, as one expert on inclusion pointed out.

The local group is currently seeking to become an officially registered organization and had already received a training on setting up an office structure by a regional OPD, in order to collaborate with other organizations and apply for funding to continue, e.g. awareness-raising sessions (LGPD, 2022b). One interviewee of a national disability mainstream organization offered to train the local group on setting up an organizational structure, writing proposals, mobilizing resources and connecting them to the local civil society network.

Persons with disabilities were further empowered through participation in financial literacy training, where they learned, among other things, how to start and improve their businesses.

However, as mentioned by several key informants, more needs to be done to fully empower persons with disabilities, for example by providing smaller grants, adapting their agricultural tools, providing continuous mentoring to gain more entrepreneurial skills and linking them to markets to sell their products and create more inclusive employment opportunities (DI FP, 2022; HI, 2022a; INGO, 2022a; INGO, 2022b; LGPD, 2022b). FGDs with DI FPs, community leaders and members of the local group of persons with disabilities further shared the importance of vocational training for persons with disabilities and the availability and accessibility of a training centre for children and adults with disabilities.

A first example was provided by one of the CPs, who ensured that two farmers with visual impairments participated in their FFA programme so that they could produce food for themselves (NNGO, 2022). Another organization stated that they had improved their cash for asset (CFA) programming by considering households with a member with a disability and identifying someone who could work on the person's behalf. This would allow the household to create an asset such as a fish farm or a pond to increase their resilience (INGO, 2022b). Further, DI FPs from one CP also empowered persons with disabilities and their caretakers by providing psychosocial support and counselling to mothers with disabilities or mothers with children with disabilities as part of their nutrition assistance.

Some of the recommendations specifically mentioned by persons with disabilities to further empower them include:

- Move beyond financial literacy training and support persons with disabilities with start-up capital, enabling them to gain additional entrepreneurial skills and form groups so that they can start their own small businesses to help generate their own income.

- Improve access to and availability of income-generating activities for men and women with different disabilities. For example, women with disabilities can be employed making bed sheets and men with disabilities can be employed making shoes or fishing nets. Linking economic inclusion with peer-to-peer support and counselling, as practised in the HARISS project, has proven to be very effective and sustainable, and could be replicated or expanded in other locations.

- Support the local group of persons with disabilities in registering as an official civil society organization/OPD to become an official partner (United Nations, 2022b), so that they can establish their own office and continue with community sensitization.

The good practice and lessons learned report has already indicated that the technical support from a disability-focused (expert) organization was essential, and the joint identification of specific priority areas for improvement helped to customize training and technical support. A former member of project staff and representative of a national and international OPD shared:

> "With the training the actors have received, they are aware of the IASC Guidelines now, and are able to enforce them throughout their programmes. [...W]ith the basics skills that they have, at least they can do the basics in terms of changing the situations and the challenges that people with disabilities are facing in the context that they are working in."
>
> OPD representative

One of the organizations that benefited from the project confirmed that they have started to follow up on the barriers faced by persons with disabilities among the people they support. They have also specifically targeted and taken into account in their programming that persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group (NNGO, 2022). One organization commented that the organizational training "stuck" most with them. They became aware that they are potentially discriminating against persons with disabilities, yet had not previously known that they had done anything wrong (INGO, 2022a; NNGO, 2022).

This also led to the training being replicated by the CPs with the support of HI experts on the inclusion of persons with disabilities beyond those originally trained (HI, 2021b). For example, one CP reported that its technical staff who were trained under the project are now guiding nutrition volunteers (INGO, 2022b). A DI FP from another organization shared that they had informed their field staff about the training content and how they can make their ongoing projects more inclusive. Another DI FP said that they had shared her knowledge with colleagues in specific and strategic meetings with management or directly with the community, for example in meetings with farmers. Another organization had sensitized the PMC on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their CFA project. It also facilitated a change at the ministerial level. Government officials now feel better equipped, as they have gained more knowledge on how to support, advocate and mobilize the community on the inclusion of persons with disabilities (State government, 2022).

In order to successfully replicate or further expand capacity development activities, the following quote should be considered.

> "When it comes to capacity building, it shouldn't be rushed. You need to give a good timeframe for capacity building, because we have different partners or different people. Of course, their level of understanding also differs, and the way they understand differs, so there may be slow learners."
>
> Staff from a disability-focused organization

Additional recommendations that were shared by research participants to continue, replicate or scale capacity development efforts, are as follows:

- Hold awareness sessions, including on the needs, risks, barriers, capacities of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities in the community, and how to meaningfully engage them (INGO, 2022a), and covering intersectionality more strongly (State government, 2022).

- Move beyond introductions to inclusive humanitarian action and sensitization sessions, and training CPs more in-depth on the use of the WGQs (INGO, 2022a).

- Use real activities or projects as examples in the training (INGO, 2022a; United Nations, 2022b), and/or combining the training with the revision of a tool, guidance, criteria or policy. For example, conducting a joint disability audit, supporting the adaptation of needs and capacity assessment tools to better capture data on persons with disabilities (DI FP, 2022; INGO, 2022a; United Nations, 2022b), or supporting the state ministry to develop strategic plans that are more disability inclusive (State government, 2022).

- Provide more capacity development and refresher trainings to front-line staff, focal persons within the communities (INGO, 2022a; NNGO, 2022), to PMCs (INGO, 2022b), to senior management staff. The latter, especially those writing project proposals, would benefit from training on disability-inclusive project cycle management (INGO, 2022a).

- Conduct follow-up sessions with training participants after one or two weeks, to check whether they are putting the knowledge into practice (INGO, 2022a).

3.2.4 Disaggregating data to monitor inclusion

The results of the B&E assessment showed that neither data disaggregated by disability, nor data on needs, risks and barriers to access services, were collected (HI, 2021a). However, disaggregation of data in the needs assessment and a better understanding of the context, including the interactions between disability, gender, age and socioeconomic status, that affect an individual's vulnerability to food insecurity in a given context, will ultimately ensure better programming and better targeting of beneficiaries. In addition, humanitarian country teams increasingly see guidance such as the **Guidance on Strengthening Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Response Plans**

as a must (Lange, Mitra and Wood, 2019; WFP, 2021a). Yet, in South Sudan, the HNO still uses the average 15 percent (OCHA, 2022b).

Therefore, HI has recommended implementing inclusive data-collection practices in the long term, by integrating the WGQs into the data needs assessment and monitoring tools, and conducting regular B&E assessments (HI, 2021a). However, and as already mentioned, due to the short duration of the project, WFP, CPs and state ministries received (only) an introduction to disability data (HI, 2022a; INGO, 2022a).

Nevertheless, according to WFP, the trainings have helped implementing partners to identify barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from accessing services. They can use this knowledge as a guide to ensure that they are inclusive in their programming. The information has also reached camp managers, who now have a better understanding and are sensitized to monitor if persons with disabilities can equally access food distribution. Conducting a B&E assessment at the beginning of the project also made the organization aware of where barriers exist, by looking at their assistance from a different angle (United Nations, 2022b). It also helped them to better identify some of the challenges and barriers for persons with disabilities in accessing food security and livelihood activities, and to work on removing these barriers during the project (INGO, 2022a).

CPs also tried to improve the registration process to better include persons with disabilities (DI FP, 2022). In some cases, caregivers or community leaders now register persons with disabilities when tools, seeds, food or other goods are distributed. They would register them and carry out the collection on their behalf (Community leaders, 2022). However, currently the CPs only collect data on men, women, girls and boys, as well as percentages of persons with disabilities, but no disaggregated data (United Nations, 2022b). A similar concept applies to FFA and CFA projects. If a person with disabilities is identified for an FFA or CFA project, the CP will ask whether someone from the same household or another community member would be available to work on the person's behalf (INGO, 2022b; NNGO, 2022).

In terms of needs assessment, monitoring and reporting, WFP and one CP indicated that CPs collect information on the number of persons with disabilities in a household, and identify the specific needs of persons with disabilities, as part of food security assessments and nutrition monitoring (INGO, 2022b; United Nations, 2022b). As part of post-distribution monitoring, where feedback is collected from beneficiaries twice a year, CPs report how many persons with disabilities they have reached with their services (United Nations, 2022b). According to WFP, the key indicators on disability that appear in the monitoring questionnaires were already in place, but were more meaningful and visible after the project.

> One national organization reported in more detail on their data collection process during the key informant interview. According to them, they identify persons with disabilities by conducting household visits to identify the type of functional difficulty and the person's needs and capacities, or they ask community leaders to share information about persons with disabilities in their community who are identified through observation. People are then selected and prioritized according to their level of vulnerability. If the person with disability is identified as being among the most vulnerable in the community, they are more likely to be considered for livelihood opportunities. Depending on the person's capacities, the organization then selects an income-generating activity. If there are informal or formal representative groups of persons with disabilities, the organization works with them and assesses who is already receiving support, how vulnerable the person is, and whether they are eligible to participate in the organization's programme or project.

According to the research participants, there are some entry points and existing data sets on the number of persons with disabilities in Yambio County. It may be useful to set up a data coordination working group to take up, learn from and improve these data sets, collection processes and tools. Examples of where data is already collected or where data collection can be improved are as follows:

- Community leaders have information about the population within their community, including number of persons with disabilities by type of functional difficulty, even though they are identified by observation (Community leaders, 2022).

- The state Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare has a list with the number of persons with physical, hearing, visual, speech/communication difficulties (State government, 2022).

- One of the CPs identifies persons with physical difficulties through their community volunteers who identify persons requiring nutritional treatment, if it is not a self-referral (INGO, 2022b).

- The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission for WES collects data on IDPs, disaggregated by gender and age. According to an interviewee, it would be possible to integrate the WGQs into the questionnaire (Government agency, 2022).

- The national education cluster looks at data disaggregation by sex, age and gender on two specific indicators, and uses secondary data from the needs assessments of education cluster members (OCHA, 2022b), and the health and protection cluster are developing monitoring tools that use the WGQs (Funke, 2023).

To further strengthen quality data collection in line with the recommendations of the IASC Guidelines,[14] research participants are recommended to:

- Review needs assessment (INGO, 2022b) and monitoring tools to collect qualitative and quantitative disability data (United Nations, 2022b).

- Engage disability-focused organizations in monitoring visits to see whether recommendations have been put into action, to evaluate what learnings can be applied and what practices replicated in other locations (INGO, 2022b; NNGO, 2022), and to hold reflective sessions after having adapted and used more disability-inclusive tools (INGO, 2022b).

- Improve the selection criteria for food security and livelihood programmes by meaningfully engaging the local group of persons with disabilities in the process (United Nations, 2022b).

- Improve CFA and cash and voucher programmes by conducting research on disability extra costs, to see whether participants spend the same amount of money, or if they spend more and therefore require more financial support (INGO, 2022a).

- Revise the CBPP guidance, based on the feedback provided by HI, to ensure that persons with disabilities are participating in this process (United Nations, 2022b).

- Learn from other collaborative data-collection efforts in South Sudan, e.g. the data collection by the national Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on gender-based violence among men and women (United Nations, 2022b).

3.3 Facilitating factors

The following section describes some of the facilitating and success factors that were key to initiate change and that supported anchoring a disability-inclusive food security and livelihood programming approach, in line with the "must do" actions and the twin-track approach. These factors are categorized into collaborative, institutional and contextual factors.

3.3.1 Collaborative factors: Partnership on equal footing

As both HI and WFP interviewees pointed out, the project built on an existing partnership between the two organizations that had been developed through another project in which HI had provided technical support and training to WFP staff in 2019. At that time, HI was already providing technical support to WFP, e.g. on their community-based planning process, and trained their front-line staff (INGO, 2022a; United Nations, 2022b). WFP expressed interest to HI in collaborating and benefiting from HI's expertise to improve food security and livelihood programmes (INGO, 2022a; United Nations, 2022b).

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14 For more information on why and how to collect data on persons with disabilities, see chapter 4 on data and information management in IASC (2019).

The joint development of the project proposal ensured that an agreement was reached on the objective and location of the project. It was designed as a pilot project to assess and address gaps on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the work of WFP and its CPs (INGO, 2022a). CP and WFP staff confirmed that working closely with and receiving direct feedback from a disability-focused organization such as HI helped them to improve disability inclusion in their own projects. At the same time, WFP's ownership and buy-in from senior staff (INGO, 2022b; United Nations, 2022b), as well as recognition of the importance of continued capacity development, helped the project achieve its goal (INGO, 2022a). Their collaboration went even beyond the pilot project. WFP also invited HI to support training on protection and AAP (United Nations, 2022b). WFP and HI continued their collaboration also after the end of the project. They planned for assessments in locations of South Sudan where the risk of food insecurity is high and access to livelihood opportunities low, especially among persons with disabilities (WFP, 2023b).

The project's participatory approach was evident when conducting and following up on the B&E assessment. Not only were governmental and non-governmental actors made aware of existing barriers during the B&E assessment (United Nations, 2022b), but they were also given the opportunity to design joint actions to address and prioritize these barriers in the short and long term (INGO, 2022a). The partners could decide for themselves what they wanted to focus on, as one HI project staff member pointed out.

> "So, it was the partners who saw what they could work on, and they're the ones who put that down. We gave a chance to them to be able to discuss among themselves and be able to see what they can work on."
>
> Staff from a disability-focused organization

As already highlighted in the previous sections, members of the local community and the local group of persons with disabilities also played an active role in the project, which was confirmed by almost all interviewees. Their involvement helped them to become familiar with their rights, enabled them to demonstrate their capacities and ultimately contributed to further breaking down barriers within the community, as highlighted in the previous sections. The fact that a person who is blind was part of the project team was seen by all interviewees as one of the main strengths of the project in breaking down attitudinal barriers within the community and among state and non-state actors.

Working closely with the chairperson of the local group of persons with disabilities also supported WFP in strengthening its collaboration with the local group of persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2022b). WFP at capital level also confirmed good collaboration with OPDs at the state and national levels. The importance of partnerships with OPDs and disability-focused organizations is also highlighted in the WFP *Guide to Inclusion of Persons With Disability in Food Assistance Programs*. It underlines the importance of involving persons with disabilities throughout the project cycle and engaging disability-focused organizations to support awareness-raising and training of WFP staff or to provide technical advice, e.g. on targeting, strengthening referral mechanisms or

context analysis (WFP, 2019b). The *Protection and Accountability Handbook* reaffirms the need for WFP to collaborate and consult with civil society organizations, including representative OPDs, in its FLAs and partnerships. This is also an opportunity to support and fund more national and local actors, in line with the Grand Bargain which was launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016 (IASC, 2021; WFP, 2021b).

One of the other success factors of this partnership has been the mutual focus on learning, as demonstrated by the discussions around the B&E assessment results, the monthly feedback sessions, the promising practice and lessons learned report, and this research. The experiences from this pilot were shared with the WFP regional office to see how other countries in the region could learn from it and apply the approaches and tools which were used. At the same time, other WFP offices reached out to South Sudan to learn from their best practices (United Nations, 2022b). The lessons learned from this project will also be useful for future projects as they can directly take into account the lessons learned from previous experiences (OPD, 2022).

In general, the project was very much in line with the WFP's key achievements at the global level, i.e. the development of technical partnerships, consultation with OPDs and inter-agency coordination (WFP, 2023a).

3.3.2 Institutional factors: Leadership and resources

Key principles of WFP to operationalize disability inclusion in programmes are much in line with the "must do" actions of the IASC Guidelines. The *Protection and Accountability Handbook* puts an emphasis on disaggregated data (by sex, age and disability), and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, their consultation during the project design by building their technical capacity, and including them as spokespersons within their own communities to ensure accessibility. It further promotes a twin-track approach, defined as having both mainstream measures, i.e. to apply a disability lens throughout, and disability-specific measures, i.e. providing targeted assistance for equal access to services (WFP, 2021b).

Institutional factors such as policies, guidelines and strategies that consider disability as a cross-cutting or specific topic, buy-in from leadership, time, and human resources, were important factors in implementing the key disability inclusion principles of the WFP mentioned above. Although not all the policies, strategies and/or guidelines mentioned below were also mentioned by the research participants, they were analysed in the content analysis and provided evidence of one or more "must do" actions that are essential for implementing and demonstrating a human rights-based understanding of disability. However, further research would be needed to find out which of these resources had an impact on the work of WFP and CPs in Yambio.

3.3.2.1 *WFP global policies, strategies and guidelines*

Policies and strategies influence institutional change, as they provide an opportunity to commit to specific targets and to evaluate its implementation (United Nations, 2019). WFP's assessment towards UNDIS indicator 3 on disability-specific policy and strategies shows that it has exceeded its score for 2021, and will presumably do so for 2022 also. This means that a policy and/or strategy is in place. As highlighted in the **introduction**, WFP has developed a Disability Inclusion Road Map

(WFP, 2021d), which was extended to 2022, and is now incorporated in the WFP's Strategic Plan (2022–2025) (WFP, 2021f).

WFP supports a people-centred approach acknowledging the diversity of its beneficiaries, including diversity within often marginalized groups. WFP considers disability inclusion mainly under gender, protection and AAP, and captures it as an intersectional factor, together with age, gender and socioeconomic status (United Nations, 2022b).

WFP's gender policy sets the objective of empowering the affected population, to ensure their equal participation and access to food security and nutrition (WFP, 2022e). Considering disability inclusion as part of protection mainstreaming support CPs to carry out an analysis of what assistance needs to be provided and how to provide it safely (WFP, 2021b). Further, disability inclusion is acknowledged in the protection and AAP policy, highlighting the importance of participation and empowerment as key protection mainstreaming principles that also include the meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities in decision making, including to receive all necessary information and providing feedback to make an informed decision (WFP, 2020; WFP, 2021e). The protection and AAP policy further emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming disability in programmes, policies and management, to comply with its strategic objectives in UNDIS (WFP, 2020).

The gender policy calls on WFP staff to analyse and use information to inform programming and services, and partner with different types of stakeholders to collect the data, including government authorities and representative groups (WFP, 2022e). In addition, the protection and AAP policy refers to disability disaggregated data, recommending the use of the WGQs, and also identifying barriers faced by the target group. The policy also makes reference to the IASC Guidelines (WFP, 2020). It dedicates a specific section to disability inclusion, highlighting the importance of identifying barriers faced by persons with disabilities and specific risks that could increase their marginalization.

In order to implement the aforementioned policies and ensure that disability is mainstreamed throughout all phases of the project cycle, it is imperative that disability inclusion is a cross-cutting topic or is addressed in a specific guidance note (United Nations, 2019). The *Protection and Accountability Handbook* considers disability inclusion quite rigorously, and provides recommendations for adequate tools. It stresses the importance of meaningful participation during the context analysis to identify barriers and protection risks. It also encourages using multiple sources of information, including conducting:

- a desk review to map out OPDs;

- KIIs with OPDs and community-based structures;

- FGDs segregated by sex, age, disability and protection concerns;

- on-site observations; and

- participatory risks assessments (WFP, 2021b).

Further, it explains the use of the WGQs to disaggregate data by age, sex, disability and location. The WFP *Guide to Inclusion of Persons With Disability in Food Assistance Programs* also highlights that the WGQs can be used for registration (via SCOPE), assessment (vulnerability analysis and mapping [VAM]), monitoring (post-distribution monitoring) and other tools (WFP, 2019b). The handbook references the technical note *Mainstreaming of Disability Disaggregation: A Phased Approach* (WFP, 2021a; WFP, 2021b). This is a useful entry point for the improving of disability data collection. It suggests working together with protection officers, VAM and M&E staff to train those who are collecting and analysing the data. The guidance advises to collect data on needs and barriers disaggregated by disability through KIIs and FGDs (WFP, 2021a). WFP's *Targeting and Prioritization: Operational Guidance Note* reaffirms the importance of a diverse representation of the affected population in a needs assessment, including persons with disabilities. This also includes consulting persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to participate equally in the targeting process. During household surveys, key information to be collected on the demographics includes the number of persons with disabilities in that household. A categorical targeting approach on an individual level also uses demographic data such as gender, age, disability and employment status. This targeting approach can be used for programmes specifically targeting vulnerable groups and works in contexts like WES, i.e. rural and camp settings (WFP, 2021c).

Further, WFP's guidance note on mainstreaming disability disaggregation recommends periodic data collection (at least annual) to monitor the indicators from WFP's Corporate Results Framework (CRF) (WFP, 2022d). It also considers disability-inclusive evaluations, making a reference to *Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations and Reporting on the UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework Evaluation Indicator*, to enable evaluators to draft disability-inclusive TORs, evaluative questions and a report that can then refer to the data collected in line with UNDIS (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2022). Lastly, meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and OPD representatives in data collection, analysis, validation and dissemination is also proposed in the guidance (WFP, 2021a).

The importance of consultation of OPDs, whether more formal or informal (loosely formed), and considering persons with disabilities in community-based planning and targeting processes, is stressed in the *Protection and Accountability Handbook*. The handbook recommends the United Nations Guidelines on Consulting Persons with Disabilities indicator 5 (United Nations, 2021), as it acknowledges that more needs to be done on meaningful consultation (WFP, 2021b).

Lastly, the *Protection and Accountability Handbook* further recommends designing feedback and complaint mechanisms based on feedback provided, including by persons with disabilities (WFP, 2021b).

3.3.2.2 Policies and strategies in the context of South Sudan

One of the institutional factors that was highlighted quite strongly by WFP staff was the South Sudan Country Strategic Plan (CSP) (2023–2025), a three-year plan with a 15-year vision, which reflects WFP's disability inclusion principles and approaches, including following an empowering, intersectional and human rights-based approach to achieve disability inclusion (WFP, 2022b).

Several objectives are set in the country-specific strategic plans, in which disability is taken into account as a cross-cutting topic. It reaffirms the importance of using the CBPP and tools, which inform the targeting by considering the needs and experiences of persons with disabilities. However, and as described in the **next section**, the CBPP guidance and tool is not yet adapted. The CSP commits to improve its data collection, disaggregating intra-household data by sex, age, disability and other socioeconomic criteria, and to strengthen its partnerships with representative organizations of women, youth and persons with disabilities. It also emphasizes the importance of women, youth and persons with disabilities participating in safety nets, skills development and vocational training programmes to increase income opportunities. In-kind and cash transfers must take into account risks, barriers, and (specific) needs and preferences of the affected population, including persons with disabilities, to promote economic empowerment and digital financial inclusion. For the monitoring and reporting on the changes and progress, it will be important to strengthen and ensure that community feedback mechanisms, e.g. help desks or community outreach, are safe, accessible and inclusive (WFP, 2022b).

The CSP offers an opportunity to improve disability inclusion in future programmes and projects, as it requests implementing partners to align their proposals to the CSP (United Nations, 2022b). The CSP is no longer a "bulky document", as highlighted by WFP staff, but is narrowed down to specific areas of intervention and indicators (WFP, 2022b).[15] In addition to the CSP, proposals submitted by CPs in South Sudan must include a thorough context and protection analysis, which is covered in the sections on protection, AAP, gender and protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Whether implementing partners have adhered to the information provided, and whether implementation is more (disability) inclusive, will be verified during monitoring visits by WFP staff (United Nations, 2022b).

In line with the previously mentioned global and South Sudan-specific policies, guidelines and strategies, in its *South Sudan Annual Country Report 2022*, WFP listed activities that supported the progress on disability inclusion. For example, WFP emphasized their engagement as co-chair of the Gender and Inclusion Roadmap Team, their joint work with HI to improve food security and livelihood opportunities, and the continued rollout of WFP's protection and AAP policy, including involvement of OPDs. According to the annual plan, WFP has also consulted diverse representatives from the communities from the affected population, including persons with disabilities to meaningfully involve them in decision making (WFP, 2023b).

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15   The first is the protection output indicator on "Number of women, men, boys and girls with disabilities accessing food/cash-based transfers/commodity vouchers/capacity strengthening services". Furthermore, there are three activity indicators on "Vulnerable populations participating in safety net programmes, especially women, the youth and people with disabilities, benefit from skills training that empowers them, enhances their self-reliance and expands their employment prospects" in the output category of resources transferred, nutritious food provided and assets created, to comply with standard output 1.1 of the WFP CRF: "Food insecure and crisis-affected populations have access to nutritious food and cash-based assistance, restored assets and services to meet their urgent needs" (WFP, 2022d).

3.3.2.3 Senior management buy-in

As WFP technical staff stressed, it is important to get support from senior management, including buy-in at headquarters level. According to the global 2023–2025 Management Plan, WFP has allocated USD 0.4 million globally for "inclusion of persons with disabilities" to ensure that persons with disabilities are reached by WFP programmes, to improve reasonable accommodation within WFP and to support inclusive and respectful workplaces. In addition, WFP has committed to recruiting "diversity and inclusion experts" in regional offices to assist with reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities (WFP, 2022f). For the seven-month project, it was important to secure senior management support, because WFP normally does not fund any disability-specific projects as it is seen as a cross-cutting topic (United Nations, 2022b).

In addition to support at the management level, support is also needed and has been provided within the organization, i.e. from colleagues who are now perceived as more open, willing and interested in discussing the inclusion of persons with disabilities and integrating it more into reference conditions and SOPs (United Nations, 2022b).

3.3.2.4 Availability of resources

The time available to staff responsible for gender and protection in the field is crucial for their participation in trainings. In addition, the gender and protection unit at the country level is seen as a good focal point for field staff to turn to for advice, as highlighted by one of WFP's technical advisers at country level. New dedicated resources such as the regional disability inclusion officers, who hold a senior position, are seen as an opportunity to provide support to countries in the region upon request. The support may take the form of field visits, assistance in policy development, strategies, proposals or reports, WFP technical staff stressed.

DI FPs are also one of the recommended actions in the *Guide to Inclusion of Persons With Disability in Food Assistance Programs* (WFP, 2019b). The seven-month project introduced the DI FP system to strengthen and monitor the level of inclusion of persons with disabilities within their own organization and to track what they put into practice (INGO, 2022a). The DI FPs were identified based on their commitment, interest and willingness (NNGO, 2022). Due to the high turnover of staff in humanitarian organizations, it has proven effective to select more than one person per organization as a DI FP (INGO, 2022). Despite having many competing priorities, the DI FP took the time to participate in the activities (INGO, 2022a), and eventually passed on the training content to the rest of the staff (NNGO, 2022).

Lastly, an online information and knowledge management platform on disability inclusion is available, to which only WFP staff have access. This is a good opportunity for WFP staff, to access the policies, tools, guidelines and key documents developed, supported and reviewed by the WFP Disability Inclusion Working Group and the WFP Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (WFP, 2021b).

3.3.3   Contextual factors: Acceptance and trust

According to a key informant from HI, the previous presence in Yambio was a great advantage in the implementation of the project. HI was able to build trust not only because of its previous work with the local community, but also because of its very community-oriented approach, working directly with community leaders and the local group of persons with disabilities (LGPD, 2022a). Due to HI's participatory approach before, after and during the project, HI was able to create acceptance in the local community, which was crucial for uptake of the advice given and the content delivered in the sensitization sessions (Community leaders, 2022; INGO, 2022). In addition, the project has been well received by the local community, as it ultimately ensures that persons with disabilities have improved access to food security and livelihood programmes and can meaningfully engage in society, which in turn strengthens social cohesion, increases their resilience to shocks and reduces poverty among persons with disabilities (LGPD, 2022a).

3.4   Hindering factors

The following section describes some of the factors that have hindered the anchoring of a disability-inclusive food security and livelihood programming approach, in line with the "must do" actions and the twin-track approach. Like the facilitating factors, these are also divided into collaborative, institutional and contextual factors.

3.4.1   Collaborative factors: Timing and sustainability

The timing of the project could have been improved. When the seven-month project started with the B&E assessment, the CPs had already identified their projects, as HI staff pointed out. This would have also enabled HI to support them in the assessment, targeting, implementation, and M&E of their project. For example, HI could have accompanied WFP or the CP during monitoring or post-distribution visits, to engage with beneficiaries and collect feedback. This would have further improved the service (NNGO, 2022). Further, it would be beneficial to have specific "milestones" as part of the project, where project beneficiaries could touch base with the disability-focused organization to follow up on their activities implemented and the challenges they are facing, as highlighted by one of the DI FPs. Key times for engagement and training could have been September or August, when CPs write their proposals, or January and February, when FLAs are issued and CPs start implementation. Yet conducting trainings in November and December can be very challenging, as organizations are occupied with completing their projects. Therefore, they have little time to engage and attend trainings (United Nations, 2022b). In addition, it is important to remember that in emergency situations where staff need to respond quickly, there is little time to attend training, as was the case in the Tambura emergency response (INGO, 2022a).

As pointed out by almost all KIIs and participants in the FGD, changes are only visible after two to three years. Some respondents even mentioned a period of five years (LGPD, 2022a; State government, 2022). The timeframe of the project was too short and financial resources limited to go beyond addressing short-term barriers. At the time, WFP was facing a decrease in funding for resilience building and crisis response programmes (WFP, 2022c), making it difficult to find funding for specific activities to improve disability inclusion (United Nations, 2022b).

Especially due to the short duration of the project, it would have been important to jointly define the next steps and/or develop an action plan (United Nations, 2022b), for example to continue the work of the Inclusion Working Group. However, according to HI, it seemed difficult to find someone with the necessary resources (time, finances and human resources) and skills to continue the Inclusion Working Group on a regular basis. A handover would have been helpful to ensure continuation (INGO, 2022a).

As both the chairperson of the Union of Persons with Disabilities Yambio and the state Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare pointed out, it was also a challenge to continue to provide or facilitate trainings, sensitization sessions or coordination meetings, especially due to lack of financial resources, for example to pay for means of transport or refreshments. Even though community leaders are willing and continue to raise awareness themselves, they too lack the financial resources to ensure consultation and participation of persons with disabilities in meetings. Furthermore, there is still a perception in the local community that it is the responsibility of the disability-focused organizations to continue to provide training (Community leaders, 2022).

In addition to the recommendations already highlighted above, the researcher received some additional recommendations to improve the continuation and sustainability of coordination mechanisms that were set in place:

- Connect the Inclusion Working Group to existing mechanisms, e.g. the Nexus (Network of Civil Societies in WES) Working Group (NNGO, 2022), with someone who can coordinate the group, even if done remotely with frequent travels to the field (INGO, 2022a).

- Strengthen disability inclusion at state (INGO, 2022b) and national cluster level, e.g. having a sub-working group under the national protection cluster level to work on guidelines, TORs or funding appeals (United Nations, 2022b).

- Strengthen the collaboration with other United Nations agencies on disability inclusion, for instance by pooling financial resources and developing a joint programme (United Nations, 2022b).

3.4.2 Institutional factors: Resources and knowledge management

WFP's main priorities in 2023 are to not only communicate and raise awareness on the why and what, but also on the how, i.e. to regionalize and localize disability inclusion to ultimately break down barriers and address needs (WFP, 2023a). However, due to the limited timeframe of the pilot project and the fact that it focused mainly on basic skills training, there was little time to address the adaptation of specific tools, even if some technical support was provided (HI, 2022a).

Even if there had been the possibility to adapt tools, the project was working at WES level, posing another challenge; as an HI technical staff member pointed out, some tools need to be changed at the national, regional or even global level. For example, in a previous engagement between WFP and HI, the WFP Guide for CBPP was reviewed as it did not mention disability (WFP, 2017a). A report with a gap and opportunity analysis was shared with WFP. However, it does not seem to have been translated into action (INGO, 2022a; United Nations, 2022b). Even though the CBPP

guide was developed by WFP headquarters with input from regional and country offices (WFP, 2017a), it may have been a challenge to adapt the tool at country level, as highlighted by HI technical staff. Nevertheless, the need to review organizational tools is evident when looking at the different targeting processes and selection criteria, as pointed out by WFP senior staff. In selecting people to be assisted, there should be specific criteria to ensure that persons with disability are included in the programme. The selection criteria must be clearly communicated to the CPs (United Nations, 2022b). From HI's perspective, more needs to be done to make guidelines and policies more disability-inclusive. One of the opportunities could be to look at how to integrate the identified long-term barriers into the strategic plans and objectives to address them more easily (United Nations, 2022b).

Knowledge management needs to be improved by making more use of the DI FPs, or by hiring a full-time member of staff to work with the different projects to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities. This person could also assist in the design and M&E of projects (DI FP, 2022). The DI FP can further train the rest of the staff, as they should know and understand the entry points within their own organization and also whether the programme is in line with the "must do" actions for disability inclusion or not. It would also be the responsibility of these individuals to make inclusion of persons with disabilities a common knowledge throughout the programming (INGO, 2022a). A pool of DI FPs can also support peer exchange, i.e. reaching out to another when needed, which was limited despite contact details being shared during the seven-month project (INGO, 2022a; NNGO, 2022). Lastly, the presence of DI FPs would be advantageous not only within humanitarian organizations, but also within the community. Such an DI FP can facilitate mobilization, sensitize, train others and monitor disability inclusion (INGO, 2022a). However, the implementation of such a system should take into account that it is more difficult for an NGO to obtain funding, or to include an activity line in its proposal for training community DI FPs on disability inclusion (DI FP, 2022).

Some additional recommendations mentioned by interviewees to dismantle hindering factors included:

- Sharing results and using the best practices of this project with senior management to secure more funding for disability inclusion, including for other locations (United Nations, 2022b).

- Having a dedicated person at country level who can fully concentrate on disability inclusion, as disability inclusion is currently part of the gender and protection team (INGO, 2022a).

3.4.3 Contextual factors: Weakness of state institutions and limited social cohesion

Even though there is a national policy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child, Social Welfare, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, 2013), and the National Disability Action Plan (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child and Welfare, 2020) is in place, the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare has not realized its commitments therein, due to security challenges and gaps in governance (Funke, 2023). It should not be the responsibility of a humanitarian actor to disseminate a policy, but the responsibility of the Government to which the policy belongs (OPD, 2022). Even if the policy was developed in collaboration with various humanitarian and development actors (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender,

Child, Social Welfare, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, 2013; South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child and Welfare, 2020) and humanitarian organization play an essential role, as authorities are not able to implement or enforce rules and regulations (Funke, 2023). In addition, several governmental and non-governmental stakeholders confirmed that they are not aware of the policy, and consider it the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for persons with disabilities to disseminate and implement it.

It is worth noting, however, that at the time of data collection, the UNCRPD had not yet been signed. A ratification of the Convention might therefore, change the situation of persons with disabilities in South Sudan (Light for the World, 2023).

One thing that could change, and which is already foreseen in the National Action Plan, is the improvement of data collection (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child and Welfare, 2020). It is the responsibility of ministries to collect disaggregated data (State government, 2022), and according to the South Sudan National Action Plan, there is even dedicated budget of USD 5.5 million for data collection. The ministry can be supported by NGOs and United Nations agencies. WFP, for example, even affirms in its global Strategic Plan 2022–2025 that it will support national actors to collect and analyse disaggregated data in national surveys (WFP, 2021f). At the state level, however, there is a concern that data collection may raise expectations that cannot be met if sufficient resources are not available. This is because, so far, a lack of financial and human resources has hindered the implementation of the national policy on the inclusion of persons with disabilities (State government, 2022).

One of the problems identified, especially by the host community, was the imbalance between support to the displaced population and to the host community. Host community members reported receiving less humanitarian assistance than IDPs and returnees in Yambio County. Interviews with IDPs and community feedback mechanisms highlighted that community leaders and local authorities channelled humanitarian assistance to specific groups, which also negatively impacted persons with disabilities in IDP and host communities (OCHA, 2022b). Therefore, the application of targeting and prioritization approaches such as CBPP requires a cohesive social structure that provides a degree of trust rather than tension between different groups, whether for socioeconomic, religious or ethnic reasons, or because of their displacement status. Otherwise, persons with disabilities will be excluded, whether intentionally or unintentionally (WFP, 2021c).

The lack of social cohesion also impacts the level of risks of exploitation which is already high in South Sudan, according to the latest HNO (OCHA, 2022b). As already described at the **beginning of this report**, in the case of women with and without disabilities, so-called "alternates" may demand money, part of the in-kind distribution or sexual favours, in return for supporting households headed by women, with or without disabilities, who are eligible for or receive food distribution. This is especially true in countries such as South Sudan, where conflict and violence destroy the family networks on which persons with disabilities rely. If the system does not allow a trusted community member to be nominated to collect cash or food on their behalf, this poses a viable protection risk. Therefore, informing persons with disabilities about the concept of alternates, and closely monitoring and tracking, are essential to help persons with disabilities reach and receive assistance directly and safely (WFP, 2019a).

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Description: Children join the adults collecting water at a refugee camp in Juba, South Sudan.

4. Conclusion

The seven-month pilot project **laid the foundation for the gradual inclusion** of persons with disabilities in food security and livelihood programmes in Yambio, WES. It contributed, and continues to contribute to, increasing their meaningful participation and access to food security and livelihood opportunities.

The project in itself **followed the four "must do" actions** recommended in the IASC *Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action* and thereby promoting their further application.

Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. Throughout the project, persons with disabilities were **meaningfully involved as co-facilitators, enumerators and project staff**. The community continued to ensure their meaningful participation in meetings, consultations and dispute resolution at the community level. WFP and CPs enhanced their participation in PMCs, SAMS and FFA projects and trainings. Meetings of the Inclusion Working Group continued to take place, with representatives of the local OPDs, although it did not continue on a regular basis.

Removal of attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers. State and non-state food security and livelihood actors, as well as the local community and informal group of persons with disabilities, **continue to be highly sensitized to the rights, barriers, opportunities and capacities of persons with disabilities** to access and meaningfully participate in food security and livelihood programmes. **Stigma and discrimination** among WFP, CPs, ministry officials and the community **have been reduced**, and the use of rights-based language ensured. WFP,

CPs and community leaders seek to further improve access to information for persons with disabilities, by strengthening communication channels and using basic sign language. Some reasonable accommodation activities continued, such as outreach services to households with, or separate priority lines for, persons with disabilities. The establishment of a **pool of DI FPs** in the different organizations and ministries has contributed to **improved knowledge management** and **continuous organization internal consultation**. At the institutional level, this has, for example, promoted the revision of a ministerial strategy after the project's completion. Remaining barriers that have not been directly addressed by the project, or have been identified as barriers that need to be addressed in the long term, will require additional financial, human and time resources. This applies, for example, to the integration of the WGQs and the B&E assessment into existing needs assessment and monitoring tools.

Empowerment of persons with disabilities. For meaningful consultation and involvement of persons with disabilities, it was important to **inform them about their rights and build their confidence to speak up**. Other activities that empowered persons with disabilities and their families were counselling for mothers with disabilities or mothers with children with disabilities, and identifying households with members with disabilities so that they can participate in income-generating activities.

Capacity development of persons with disabilities, the local community, and governmental and non-governmental food security and livelihood actors. The project implemented a wide range of capacity development activities, including community sensitization events, training on the basics of inclusive humanitarian action with a particular focus on food security and livelihoods, and selected technical support. These activities have not **only increased awareness and confidence among the various stakeholders**, but have also resulted in **continued community sensitization,** albeit limited due to lack of funding, and in DI FPs sharing their knowledge and mentoring their colleagues and volunteers within their own organizations.

Disaggregate data for monitoring inclusion. WFP and CP need to collect information on the number of persons with disabilities, and identify specific needs as part of the needs assessment. Currently, persons with disabilities are mainly identified by observation, instead of using the recommended WGQs. Therefore, an **in-depth training on the use of the WGQs is needed**. Aside from collecting quantitative data on the prevalence of persons with disabilities, more data is needed on barriers, enablers, risks and capacities of persons with disabilities to inform WFP's and CPs' programming. The B&E assessment at beginning of the project has had a lasting impact on the understanding, identification and prioritization of these factors in the organizations' own projects and programmes. Yet, **more technical support** is needed to **adapt assessment and monitoring tools to collect, analyse and use this qualitative data for programming**.

The research identified a number of factors that contributed to the success of the project and the continuation of promising practices, as well as factors that hindered the continuation of such practices and that would need to be improved in the future.

Senior management buy-in and **funding approval for a disability-specific project** was crucial, even though this did not lead to the continuation of the project or new project phases due to funding constraints. The project duration was sufficient to address a number of short-term barriers identified

at the beginning, but **more time and resources are needed to continue** this work and also **address longer-term barriers**.

The **cooperation and collaboration at eye level** between HI, WFP, collaborating partners, state ministries and the local OPD was a success factor. HI's **participatory and individualized approach** to the implementation of the project, i.e. the active involvement of persons with disabilities, WFP and its CPs throughout the project, including the **prioritization of barriers to be addressed by the project**, and **the use of existing opportunities and entry points,** was a major strength of the project.

This ensured the **ownership** of the different actors involved. All stakeholders involved in the project welcomed the **focus on continuous learning** and the **designation of at least two to four DI FPs per organization**. In order to continue the peer exchange and learning that had stalled after the project due to staff changes, lack of time and lack of continuous technical guidance, the DI FPs identified **additional learning needs in the form of refresher and in-depth training.**

Some of the **policies, strategies and guidelines** reviewed in the context analysis showed that the inclusion of persons with disabilities is seen as a **cross-cutting topic**, or that **specific resources** have been developed. In the context of this research, it was not possible to assess whether and to what extent the research participants were aware of these. However, as these are consistent with the rights-based understanding of disability and reflect the "must do" actions, they have the potential to guide future activities at country level, which then **need to be translated into practical tools for front-line staff**. The **adaptation of these tools** to the IASC Guidelines can be **combined with trainings to directly apply the gained knowledge and create ownership of the tool**.

A **good understanding of all contextual factors** that can inhibit or positively influence the inclusion of persons with disabilities in a community is required. The **involvement of the ministry responsible for persons with disabilities** in the project, which is responsible for implementing the existing policy and legal framework for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, was important to strengthen understanding and ownership. HI's previous work in this regard contributed to the community's acceptance of the implementation of this project and strengthened the uptake of the awareness-raising and sensitization sessions. These were in themselves a means of improving social cohesion and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in the community.

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Description: Mary uses the tricycle she received from HI to transport her goods to the market.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings from the discussions with WFP, HI, CPs, government representatives and persons with disabilities, recommendations were made to improve, scale up or replicate the activities in the same or a different context. These recommendations are primarily addressed to WFP and HI, but may also be taken up by other actors previously involved in the project and beyond.

5.1   Recommendations for replicating the project in a different context

Promote meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and representative organizations

- Ensure **meaningful participation** of persons with disabilities **throughout the project**.

- Engage persons with disabilities as **active contributors** to the project, e.g. as co-facilitators for trainings/awareness sessions, enumerators, or as employees; taking an active role increases learning.

- **Identify (in)formal groups** of persons with disabilities, which are interested and have the capacity to be engaged in project activities.

Remove barriers

- Ensure that the **project activities are inclusive and accessible** in themselves for project staff and those benefiting from the project.

Empower persons with disabilities and support them and humanitarian stakeholders to develop their capacities

- Inform and **train persons with disabilities on their rights and any other necessary skills** to effectively and meaningfully engage, e.g. facilitation skills.

- Ensure access to livelihood opportunities for persons with disabilities by supporting them with **financial literacy training**.

- **Decrease stigmatization and discrimination, and foster a change in perception** about the capacities of persons with disabilities at community level and among governmental and non-governmental food security actors, through **sensitization sessions**.

- Ensure that **trainings follow a participatory approach** and are tailored to the IASC Guidelines, the food security and livelihood sector and the needs of the participants. Use examples from the B&E assessment and provide trainings at different level, i.e. community (leaders), local groups or organisations of persons with disabilities, CPs, WFP or state ministries.

- Emphasize the need for **multiple communication channels** and the **use of rights-based language** through **training on inclusive communication** and **sign language interpretation**.

- Train a **pool of DI FPs** to support and guide their own organization. Ensure that two to four DI FPs per organization are trained to pass on knowledge to other staff and volunteers and mitigate the impact of staff turnover.

- For the disability-focused organization, **provide one-to-one coaching and mentorship sessions focusing on specific issues** that were raised during the trainings.

- Support organizations in **improving the accessibility** of distribution, nutrition sides and help desks by highlighting the different barriers and **reasonable accommodation** needs in **trainings and one-to-one sessions**.

Disaggregate data for monitoring inclusion

- During the project design, consider what data to collect and when; conduct a **joint B&E assessment** at the beginning of the project, **regular feedback meetings** during the project, and identify **promising practices and lessons learned** at the end of the project.

Consideration of collaborative factors

- Build a project on an **existing partnership** to have a good understanding of how to complement each other's work and organizational expertise.

- **Development of the project proposal jointly** to ensure joint ownership.

- **Conduct joint activities**, such as assessing barriers and enabling factors, to look at organizations' programmes from a disability perspective, and identify and directly address short-term barriers.

- **Use existing or revamp former collaborations** with, for instance, (in)formal groups of persons with disabilities, and **coordination mechanisms**, for example Disability Inclusion Working Groups.

- Use the **Inclusion Working Group as a forum to exchange** ideas, encourage peer learning, plan joint events and advocacy messages, and to improve existing referral mechanisms.

- **Enable inter-agency peer exchange and learning,** and share promising practices across the region for broader learning.

Consideration of institutional factors

- Ensure **senior management buy-in** (at country, regional and/or headquarters level).

- Pick up on the commitment of colleagues and **engage gender and protection focal points/ unit, disability inclusion officers** and/or existing DI FPs.

- Check whether **disability-specific resources are available**, or how the inclusion of persons with disabilities is integrated **(mainstreamed) into existing policies, guidelines, tools and processes**:

  ○ Is inclusion of persons with disabilities a cross-cutting topic in the CSP?

  ○ Is there a national policy and/or action plan on the inclusion of persons with disabilities?

  ○ How is disability referred to in organizational policies, e.g. in the Gender Policy, or in the Protection and Accountability Policy?

  ○ Which tools are recommended to implement the policy? Are they in line with the IASC Guidelines, or do they need to be adapted?

Consideration of contextual factors

- Consider contextual factors that may positively influence or prevent a positive project outcome, such as **social cohesion, trust and acceptance within the community** to implement project activities, or consider frequent/periodic emergencies that potentially

result in a reprioritization of activities or that consume additional resources (financial, human, time) of organizations participating in the project.

5.2 Recommendations for improving and scaling activities in Western Equatoria

Promote meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and representative organizations

- Increase the **representation of persons with psychosocial** and **intellectual disabilities**, of different ages and gender.

- **Collaborate** with persons with different disabilities and representative organizations to **improve accessibility and reasonable accommodation**, such as of distribution points, helpdesks or service points.

Remove barriers

- **Review and adapt existing tools, processes and mechanisms**, for example CBPP, post-distribution monitoring and needs assessment tools and processes, feedback and complaint mechanisms, and referral mechanisms.

- **Strengthen employment opportunities** for persons with disabilities within the organization.

- **Budget for reasonable accommodation**, training/sensitization sessions and coordination activities with other actors into project proposals.

Empower persons with disabilities and support them and humanitarian stakeholders to develop their capacities

- **Expand (community) awareness sessions** to other locations, including more rural areas, and train focal persons within the communities and PMC members.

- **Support local OPDs in accessing resources** to continue with the community sensitization sessions.

- **Improve and expand practical, tailor-made** training, by:

  ○ Providing more **refresher** and **in-depth trainings**, for instance on the WGQs to collect quantitative data on the prevalence of disability, or B&E assessments to collect qualitative data on barriers, enablers, capacities, (disability-) specific needs and risks.

  ○ **Training more front-line staff and senior management staff** (who are writing project proposals).

  ○ **Using ongoing projects, activities or processes for the scenario and group work** in the trainings.

    ○ **Linking the trainings to a review of existing tools and processes**, taking into account that some tools can be adapted more easily than others, as some might require a broader adaptation process at country, regional or headquarters level.

    ○ **Covering intersectionality** (gender, age and disability) and the needs, risks, barriers and capacities of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.

    ○ **Conducting follow-up sessions** with the training participants after one or two weeks to check if they put the knowledge into practice.

- **Improve access to and availability of income-generating activities** for men and women with different disabilities, by:

    ○ Strengthening access and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in farmer groups trained by CPs.

    ○ Using lessons learned from previous projects that have proven to be very effective and sustainable, e.g. the HARISS project that combined economic inclusion with peer-to-peer support and counselling and employed women with disabilities in bed sheet making and men with disabilities in shoe and fishing net making.

    ○ Considering that education for persons with disabilities is not considered a priority, but that it has a negative impact on subsequent employment opportunities and that families with members with disabilities may not have the financial means to send their child to school.

Disaggregate data for monitoring inclusion

- **Set up a working group/task force on data coordination**, to identify and use existing data sets, and learn from other data-collection efforts, such as the data collection on gender-based violence in men and women by the national Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, supported by UNFPA.

- **Strengthen data collection using the WGQs and B&E assessments**, and by learning from other data-collection efforts, including the work of national and state clusters and actors.

- **Strengthen collection of disability data nationally** so that it can inform planning and programme design at county level.

- **Engage disability-focused organizations in monitoring visits** to see whether recommendations have been put into action, to evaluate what learnings can be applied and what practices replicated in other locations, and to hold reflective sessions after having adapted and used more disability-inclusive tools.

Consideration of collaborative factors

- Improve the **timing of the project**, aligning it to the project/funding cycle, and **extending**, if possible, **the time frame to two to three years**.

- **Detail the next steps/action plan** to ensure a continuity of activities also after the project's completion.

- **Ensure a continuity of coordination mechanisms**, for instance by connecting the Inclusion Working Group to existing mechanisms, e.g. the Nexus (Network of Civil Societies in WES) Working Group. Identify someone who can coordinate the group, even if remotely with frequent travels to the field.

- Strengthen disability inclusion at state and national cluster level, e.g. having a sub-working group under the national protection cluster level to work on guidelines, TORs or funding appeals.

- Strengthen the collaboration with other United Nations agencies on disability inclusion by, for instance, pooling financial resources and developing a joint programme.

Consideration of institutional factors

- **Share results and use the best practices** of this project **with senior management** to secure more funding for disability inclusion, including for other locations.

- **Provide funding to address more long-term barriers**.

- Consider **how to maintain knowledge management** through DI FPs, despite staff turnover.

Consideration of contextual factors

- Consider the capacities and responsibilities of state ministries on data collection and policy implementation.

- **Consider the representation of persons with different disabilities, of different gender, age, socioeconomic and displacement status**, when consulting the community.

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Description: Focus group discussion with community leaders in Yambio.

Appendices

Humanitarian situation in South Sudan

The latest data on South Sudan show that 9.4 million people are projected to be in need of assistance in 2023, of whom 24 percent are women, 54 percent are children and 15 percent persons with disabilities (OCHA, 2022b).

Figure 3 shows the severity of the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, including the number of persons affected by crisis in the different states and counties. As shown on the map, Yambio (200,000 people in need) and Tambura County (100,000 people in need) are extremely impacted.

Figure 3. Severity of humanitarian conditions and number of people in need in South Sudan
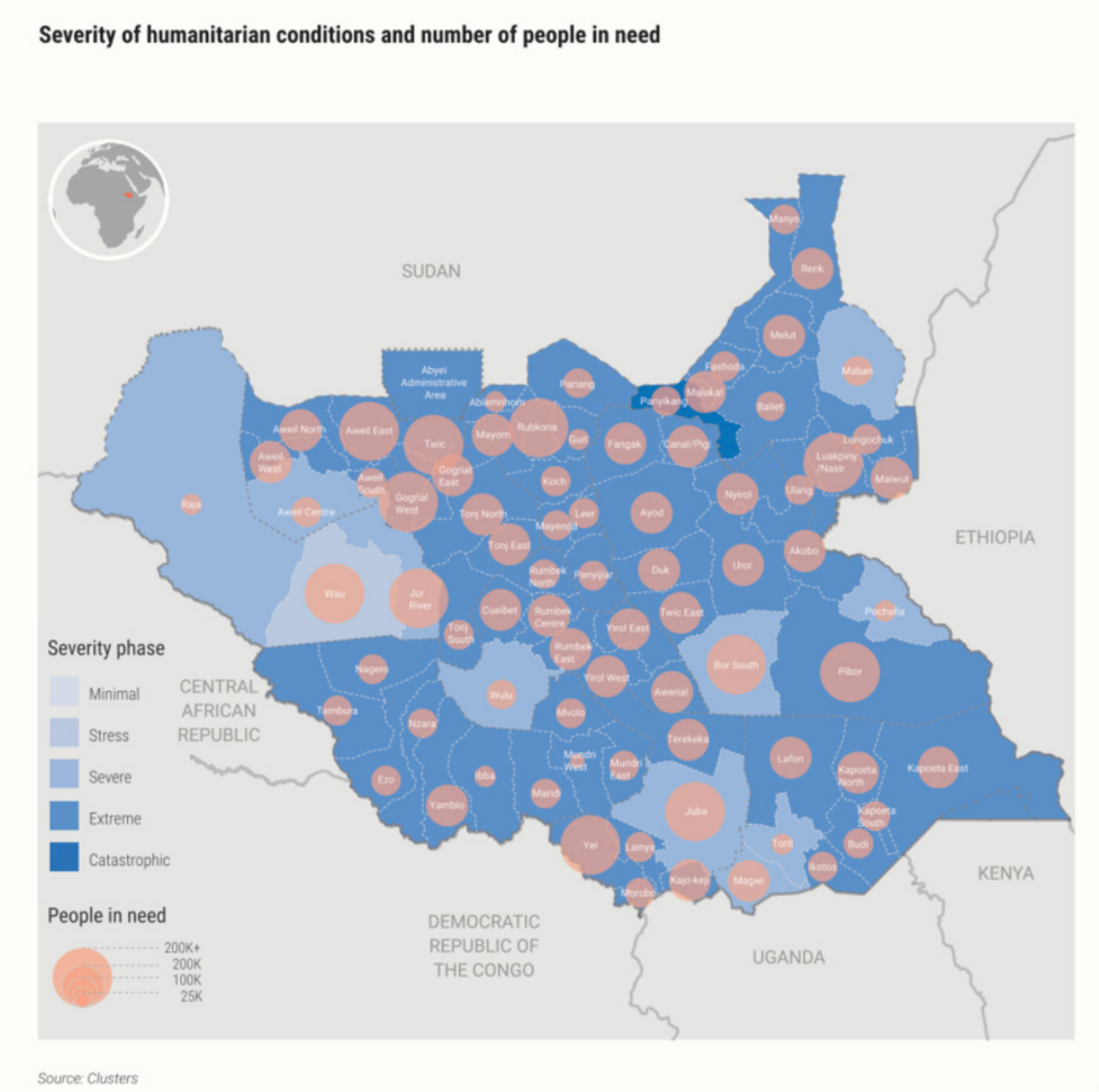
Source: OCHA (2022c).

Security in WES continues to be affected by the secession of local groups, and ongoing conflict is expected to further increase the need for shelter and other relief supplies (OCHA, 2022b). Figure 4 visualizes the humanitarian risks analysis as of September 2022, showing incidents of conflict in Tambura, WES, which displaced 80,000 persons in 2021 (OCHA, 2022c).

Figure 4. Humanitarian risk analysis of South Sudan in September 2022

Humanitarian risk analysis as of September 2022

Sources: ACLED, WFP, Logistics Cluster, IOM DTM Round12, Mine Action AoR, UNOSAT and OCHA
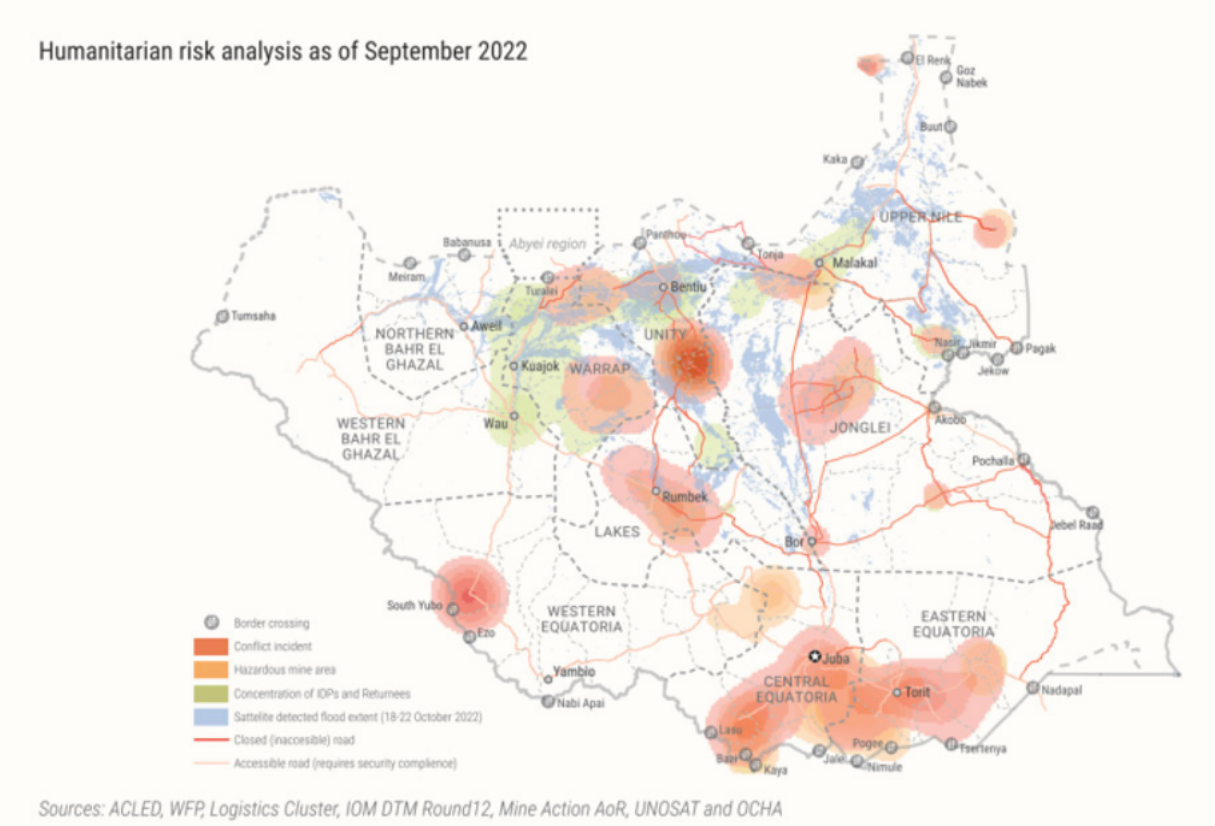
Source: OCHA (2022b, p. 9).

Food insecurity is severe in South Sudan; an estimated 7.8 million South Sudanese people will be severely food insecure at the peak of the lean season from April to July 2023. The main cause for food insecurity is the impact of climate change, such as floods, dry spells or local droughts. For example, WES was severely affected by flooding between July and October 2022 (alongside Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap and Unity State). Together with Upper Nile State, WES also has the highest number of districts in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. South Sudan is facing inflation and an increase in food prices, exacerbated by the loss or disruption of livelihoods due to the conflict and violence. In addition, food security is affected by protection issues such as displacement, gender-based violence and conflict, which also destroy livelihoods and impact mental health (OCHA, 2022b). Households have struggled and are still struggling to cope with the increased cost of living and economic instability, as well as the socioeconomic impact of Covid-19. Households with persons with disabilities have been disproportionately affected, facing societal and economic barriers in meeting their basic needs (HI, 2021b). Displaced persons are more likely to be food insecure – 61.1 percent of all IDPs and households headed by persons with disabilities, women, persons who are aged under 18 years or 60 years and above, and/or have a low or no education, are more prone to food insecurity (OCHA, 2022a; OCHA, 2022b). Additional challenges, such as funding constraints and ration cuts by WFP (from 50 to 70 percent) in camps for IDPs further exacerbate the situation in South Sudan (OCHA, 2022a).
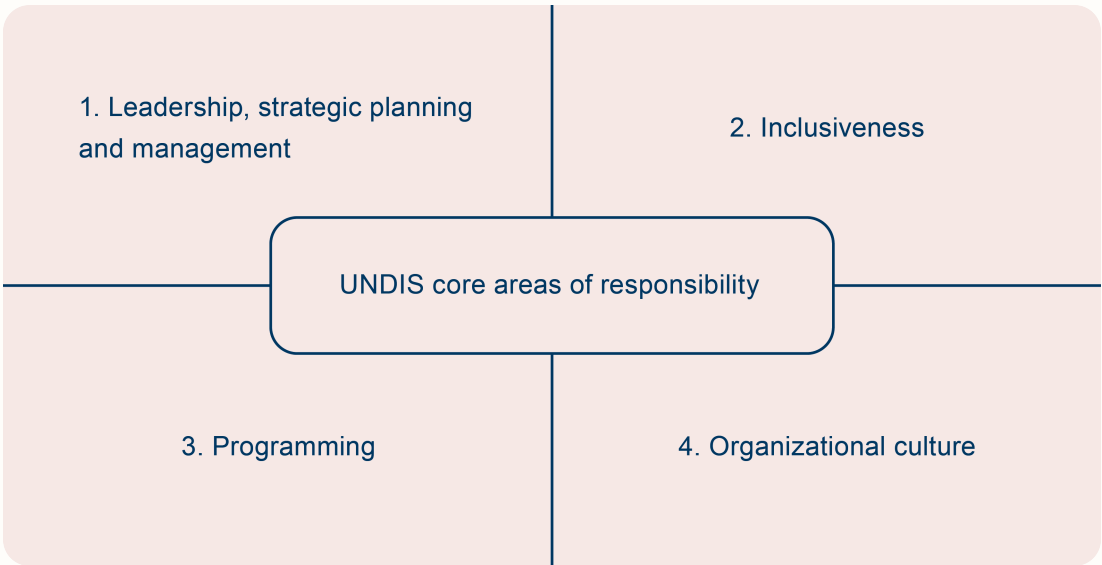
Policy and legal frameworks on disability inclusion

In 2019, **UNDIS** was launched to support the implementation of the **UNCRPD** and the progress towards the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** and the **Agenda for Humanity**.

UNDIS sets out four key areas of responsibility guided by three key approaches, namely the twin-track approach,[16] intersectionality and coordination. The four key areas of responsibility include:

- promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities within leadership, policies, strategies and disability inclusion teams;

- consulting persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to ensure physical accessibility and accessibility of information;

- providing practical guidance to United Nations staff to support and evaluate disability inclusion programmes; and

- improving employment and building capacity in the area of disability inclusion (United Nations, 2019).

Figure 5. UNDIS core areas of responsibility

1. Leadership, strategic planning and management

2. Inclusiveness

UNDIS core areas of responsibility

3. Programming

4. Organizational culture

Source: United Nations (2019).

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16   The twin-track approach as described in the IASC Guidelines differentiates between targeted interventions that address specific requirements of persons with disabilities, and mainstream interventions which targeted the whole population, including persons with disabilities (IASC, 2019).

The same year, the **IASC *Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*** (the IASC Guidelines) were launched. The IASC Guidelines were developed through a three-year participatory process by a task team of more than 600 different stakeholders from the humanitarian and disability sector. The task was set up as a result of the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, and the commitments made by various humanitarian actors (United Nations agencies, I/NNGOs, donors, OPDs) in the **Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action**.

Specifically relevant to operationalize the IASC Guidelines are the four "must do" actions:

1.   promote meaningful participation;

2.   remove barriers;

3.   empower persons with disabilities; support them to develop their capacities; and

4.   disaggregate data for monitoring inclusion (IASC, 2019).

Even though evidence is still limited on how the publication of the IASC Guidelines have encouraged humanitarian stakeholders to improve their programming and become more disability inclusive, some research already notes positive indications and a ripple effect, where actors have started to promote disability inclusion through their own internal policies and guidelines (Funke, 2023).

In South Sudan, among other countries, NGOs and United Nations agencies have started to put in place community groups, which would consult persons with disabilities and DI FPs who monitor progress, also establishing accessible service and distribution points and reaching out to disability-focused organizations for further guidance and support. While more and more actors have heard of the IASC Guidelines and the four "must do" actions, and have endorsed the Humanitarian Disability Charter, they lack the skills, knowledge and tools to implement the recommendations and commitments (Funke, 2023).

On 24 February 2023, South Sudan signed a number of international human rights instruments. These included:

●   the UNCRPD and Optional Protocol;

●   the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

●   the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and

●   the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right's on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (Ninrew, 2023).

With the signing of the UNCRPD by the South Sudan Government on 24 February 2023 (Light for the World, 2023), humanitarian actors now have the opportunity to push more strongly for the collection of more data on disabilities, as governments are obliged to monitor and report on progress in implementing the UNCRPD (WFP, 2021b). To date, there is very little reliable data on

people with disabilities in South Sudan. Previous estimates from the last census in 2008, before South Sudan's independence, suggest that 5.1 percent of the population has a disability (South Sudan Association of the Visually Impaired, 2016), but this is not in line with the most recent global estimate of 16 percent of the world's population (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

The UNCRPD is strengthened by and further strengthens the implementation of:

- the unanimously adopted United Nations Security Council Resolution 2475 on persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict and peacebuilding (United Nations, Security Council, 2019; WFP, 2021b);

- South Sudan's National Policy on Disability and Inclusion (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child, Social Welfare, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, 2013); and

- the National Action Plan adopted in 2020 (South Sudan, Ministry of Gender, Child and Welfare, 2020).

WFP globally and in South Sudan

WFP's mandate is to provide food assistance for persons living in humanitarian settings and recovering from them. In South Sudan, WFP ensures that food and nutrition needs are met by people who are affected by multi-crisis impacts, including conflict, displacement, health concerns, and climate- and economic-related shocks, through different (un-)conditional modalities, livelihood opportunities and logistical support (WFP, n.d.). Projects funded or implemented by WFP include GFD during lean season, FFA and CFA,[17] cash and voucher assistance, SAMS, and school feeding and nutrition programmes (HI, 2021a). In 2022, WFP reached 5,640,342 beneficiaries in total in South Sudan, of which 129,472 were persons with disabilities (54 percent female and 46 percent male) (WFP, 2023b).

CFA and FFA programmes target the most vulnerable and food insecure households in a community. These provide an opportunity for the households or the community to build asset and support with the restauration of agricultural, pastoral or fisheries potential, including by developing skills to manage resources and assets while providing food or cash to cover immediate needs. Its objective is to empower local communities and increase their resilience to future shocks and stressors, as well as to promote gender equality. However, one of the preconditions is that the person shall have the physical ability to work. The SAMS includes four pathways: encouraging smallholder farmers to invest in agriculture and expand production; aggregation of smallholder farmers in groups, associations and cooperatives, in order to access high value markets; improvement of quality production, nutrition and gender equality; and identification and accessibility of market systems (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] and WFP, 2021).

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17   CFA is a sub-set of cash for work. It is a conditional transfer of cash payments to participants who are taking part in projects to create community or public assets. Examples include irrigation systems, roads, etc. (CALP Network, 2015).

WFP follows a three-pronged approach, including a CBPP approach at local level.[18] The CBPP supports the development in a participatory manner of multisectoral plans, which are reflective of and responsive to local priorities, thereby creating local ownership (WFP, 2017b; UNHCR and WFP, 2021). It includes, among other information, detail on local requirements, profiles of vulnerability and the main problems of the affected population, including taking into consideration gender inequality to eventually strengthen livelihood opportunities, address undernutrition causes and food insecurity. One of the key principles of the CBPP is to be inclusive and participative, ensuring the representation of different groups, and linking to key cross-cutting aspects of gender, nutrition, protection and AAP (UNHCR and WFP, 2021).

WFP has not only endorsed the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (HI, 2016) but has also actively supported the development of the IASC Guidelines (IASC, 2019), and the Guidance on Strengthening Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Response Plans (Lange, Mitra and Wood, 2019; WFP, 2019b). Further, WFP has committed to report on progress made in line with the UNDIS. The United Nations country teams are obligated to report against the accountability framework every year. WFP contributes as a United Nations country team member on joint processes and programmes (WFP, 2021b).

To ensure that WFP operationalizes and implements its commitments, the current global Strategic Plan (2022–2025) sets forth some objectives on disability inclusion, namely:

- meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in operations and programming;

- taking disability inclusion into consideration for management and support functions; and

- ensuring that WFP is a (disability)-inclusive employer.

A CRF guides WFP programmes in planning, monitoring and evaluating the objectives stipulated in the strategic plan. The CRF supplements the CSP, towards which the country office reports every year. The CRF includes four indicators on disability, including three Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review indicators on accessibility,[19] consultations with OPDs,[20] and employment that is aligned with UNDIS,[21] position WFP alongside other United Nations actors in their common efforts to become more disability-inclusive. The CRF includes one specific output indicator in the cross-cutting issues and AAP section:

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18   The other two approaches are an integrated context analysis at national level and a seasonable livelihood programming at subnational level.

19   Under WFP cross-cutting priorities and protection indicator "WFP meets or exceeds UNDIS entity accountability framework standards concerning accessibility (QCPR)" (WFP, 2022d).

20   Under WFP cross-cutting priorities and accountability indicator: "Percentage of WFP country offices and units meeting or exceeding United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) standards on consulting organizations of persons with disabilities (QCPR)" (WFP, 2022d).

21   Under management result 2 on people management, and key performance indicator number 3 on increasing workforce: "WFP meets or exceeds UNDIS entity accountability framework standards concerning employment (QCPR)" (WFP, 2022d).

"Number of women, men, boys and girls with disabilities accessing food/cash-based transfers/commodity vouchers/capacity strengthening services"

Lastly, the CRF refers to 44 output indicators that request disaggregated data "by sex, age group, disability, residence status, transfer modality and programme, where possible" towards which mainly WFP country offices have to report (WFP, 2022d).

In South Sudan, WFP currently follows the South Sudan CSP (2023–2025). The CSP was developed in consultation of different humanitarian actors, including representatives of OPD (United Nations, 2022b), and is based on the evaluation from the last interim CSP 2018–2022 and other key national and United Nations policies, strategies and reports,[22] as well as the Humanitarian Response Plan 2022. The humanitarian-development-peace nexus guides the CSP. It lays emphasis on strengthening climate resilience, investing in human capital through livelihood opportunities, using community-based and conflict sensitivity approaches to increase social cohesion, and strengthening national ownership and partnership to reduce the need for humanitarian action, by transferring programmes increasingly to the Government.

The CSP intends to achieve the zero-hunger objective, and contributes to leaving no one behind, by responding to the needs and risks of those who are often marginalized in accessing services, including persons with disabilities, women and girls, and older and younger persons, following a rights-based and intersectional approach.

Therefore, the CSP defines five outcomes. The current CSP contributes to a long-term vision for and approach of WFP over the next 13 years, and will be followed by two more CSPs. Figure 6 visualizes the existing policy frameworks, their interdependencies and relation to disability inclusion, as described above.

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22 The South Sudan CSP (2023–2023) is "informed by South Sudan Vision 2040, the revised 2021–2024 national development strategy, the 2022 humanitarian response plan, key sectoral strategies, the 2021 national food systems dialogue, the 2021 country analysis and the draft 2023–2025 United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework" (WFP, 2022b).

Figure 6. WFP policy structure adapted based on aforementioned information
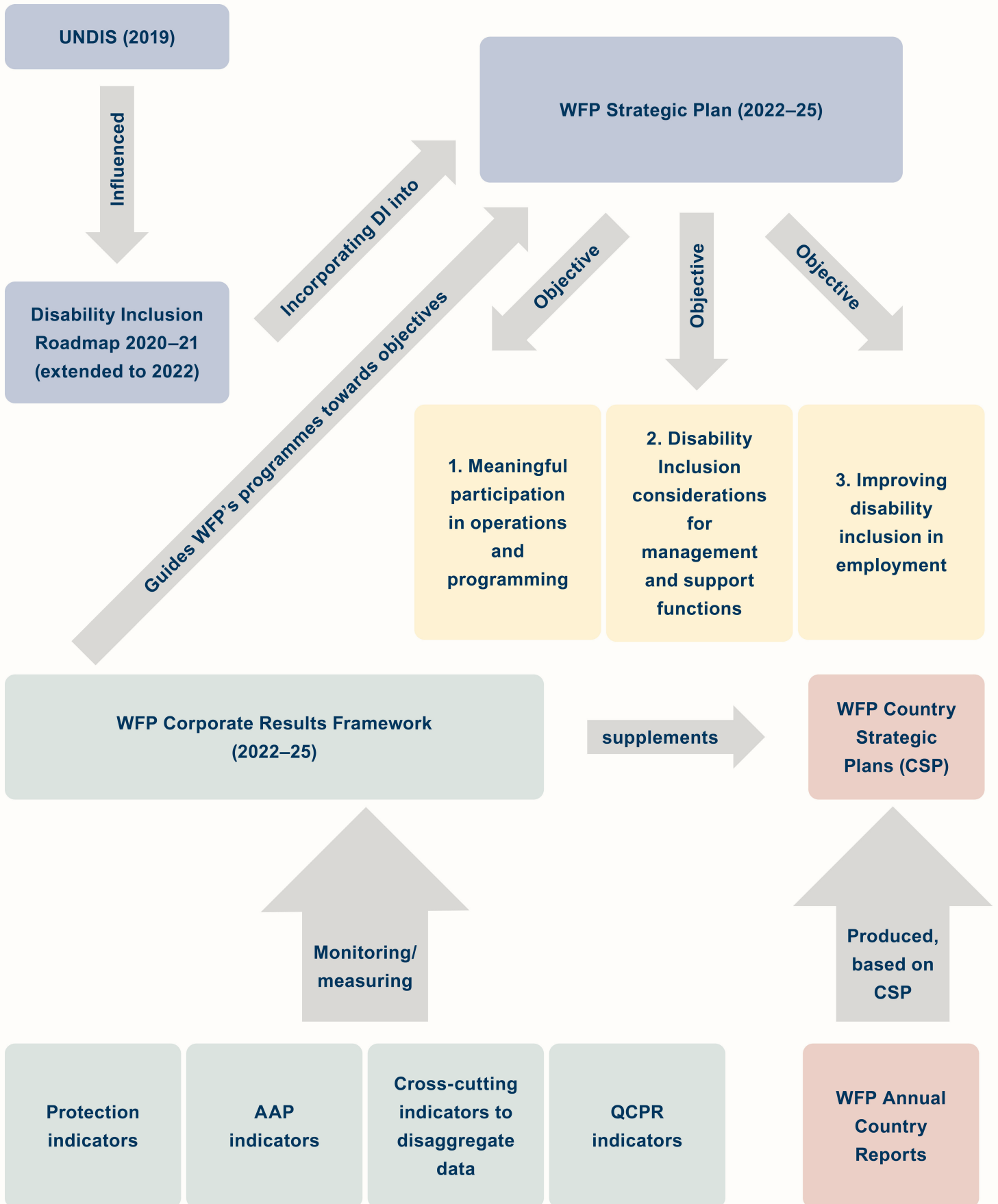
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