Inclusive Futures

UKaid
from the British people

Driving change: six principles for disability inclusive development

Learning from Inclusive Futures
September 2024

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Executive summary

People with disabilities are being left behind in development. Inclusion is affirmed in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities but we know that many development projects are still failing to include people with disabilities.

As UK aid's flagship disability inclusion initiative, Inclusive Futures implements projects for and with people with disabilities. We aim to create inclusive projects that improve access, equity, and outcomes for people with disabilities in work, education and health care, and reduce negative stereotyping, stigma and discrimination. We also share our learning about what works – and what doesn't.

From 2019-23, we delivered 12 projects in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria and Tanzania. The six principles in this paper draw on our practical experience and learning about disability inclusion from these projects – from the successes to the challenges.

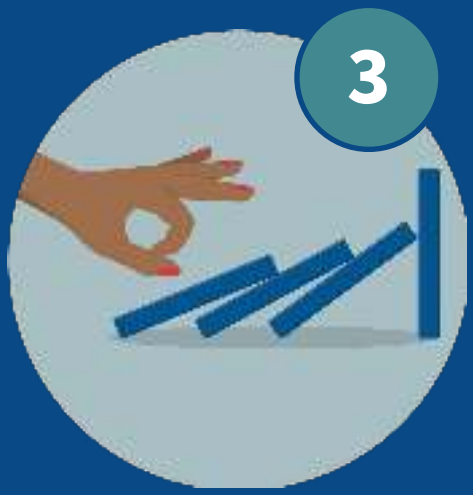
Our findings are essential reading for visionary leaders and motivated peers across the development and humanitarian sectors, from both non-disability and disability-focused organisations, who are committed to leaving no one behind. We believe that these six principles will give you the confidence and guidance you need to make your projects inclusive of people with disabilities.

Be ambitious – build inclusion into every phase

From the very start, our aim was to spark a revolution in disability inclusion. By embedding it in every phase – formalising engagement with organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), mapping what each person needs to participate, prioritising women and girls with disabilities, and tackling risks – you can set the stage for transformative change.

If it's not working – change it!

We learnt that responding to what worked and what didn't in each project allowed us to maximise inclusion. We used feedback from people with disabilities, as well as data and reflections from project staff to improve delivery and achieve change. People with disabilities often face multiple challenges – by being open to different approaches and broadening the scope of your project, you can help ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.

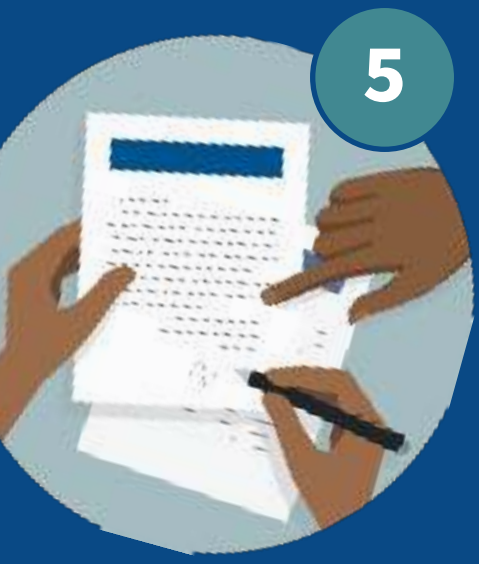


3 Shatter stereotypes and break down barriers

People with disabilities still face widespread negative stereotyping, stigma and discrimination. We stopped this from becoming a barrier in projects and services by working with OPDs who play a key role in challenging discrimination and raising awareness. Focus on making people with influence and decision-making power allies of the programme, and use mass media campaigns, training or a more comprehensive social behaviour change approach to engage communities.

4 Collect precise data and track your spending on inclusion

We ensured data from people with disabilities was accurate and context-specific, with well-trained data collectors. We meticulously tracked inclusion spending, clearly documenting costs in separate budget lines. Development projects aren't good value for money if they exclude people with disabilities. Analyse what you spend on reasonable accommodations and refocus 'value for money' to include equity – the value of leaving no-one behind.



5 Capture changes and tell your story

We worked with people with disabilities to agree on project goals that would make a concrete difference in their lives. We also explored how to report on the steps we took to improve participation and inclusion that weren't captured by traditional project measurement – focusing on the quality of our engagements, not just the quantity. Aim to be flexible, creative and pragmatic about how you measure and communicate change.

6 Don't try to do it alone – form partnerships

We benefited from working closely alongside people with disabilities, OPDs, local and national decision makers, other INGOs and research partners. When we worked with OPDs we found that they boosted inclusion in numerous ways, including reaching community stakeholders with messaging, advocacy, and identifying people with disabilities to take part in the programme. To work together effectively, all partners in your project need to be open to changing and trying innovative approaches.

Context: Poverty, disability and development

I and other women with disabilities have benefitted so much from the Inclusive Futures livelihoods programme…It was through this training that I gained the self-esteem to approach institutions and ask them to give us business opportunities…When you don't have money in your pocket, when you don't have confidence, you don't speak out. Now, we are able to speak out about the issues that affect us economically.

Lucy Mulombi, microentrepreneur and chair of the Kakamega County Disability Caucus, Kenya

From an early age, a child with a disability can be left out of a school that every other child in the village attends, left out of skills training that is available to their adolescent peers, then left out of job opportunities that are essential for their financial independence or stability, and left out of health discussions or services that are integral to their well-being and bodily autonomy. The result is that people with disabilities are more likely than their non-disabled peers to have lower rates of educational attainment, employment, and access to health care.[1] Without access to government support, households with disabled family members are more likely to live with lower incomes and more likely to experience higher rates of poverty.[2] Intersecting factors can compound each person's access and experience of education, health and livelihoods, including impairment type, gender, age, location.[3]

And yet, disability is a de-prioritised area in international development. According to data analysed by members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), on average just 7.2% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) between 2018 and 2022 was disability inclusive.[4] The vast majority of development aid had no provision for including people with disabilities.

When a development project does include people with disabilities, often barriers continue to prevent their full and meaningful participation: from inaccessible venues and information to a lack of representation on decisions involving planning, governance or budget.[5] Development actors and governments often don't work closely enough with representative organisations (OPDs) to ensure participation is meaningful, and limited financial and human resources combined with stigma, negative stereotyping and discrimination mean that all too often development projects that aim to improve conditions for local populations can exclude up to 16% of the population – those with a disability.[6]

We have **mapped common excuses** for not including people with disabilities, including a lack of disability-inclusive expertise or focus in an organisation, a lack of data about disability in a project population, and a lack of evidence about how to do it well. What we know is that if a development programme does not include people with disabilities, it is furthering exclusion and marginalisation. Inclusion is everyone's responsibility – in every programme.

This learning summary provides clear principles and examples to embed inclusion in a development programme, based on what we have tried, what's worked and what hasn't, in Inclusive Futures.

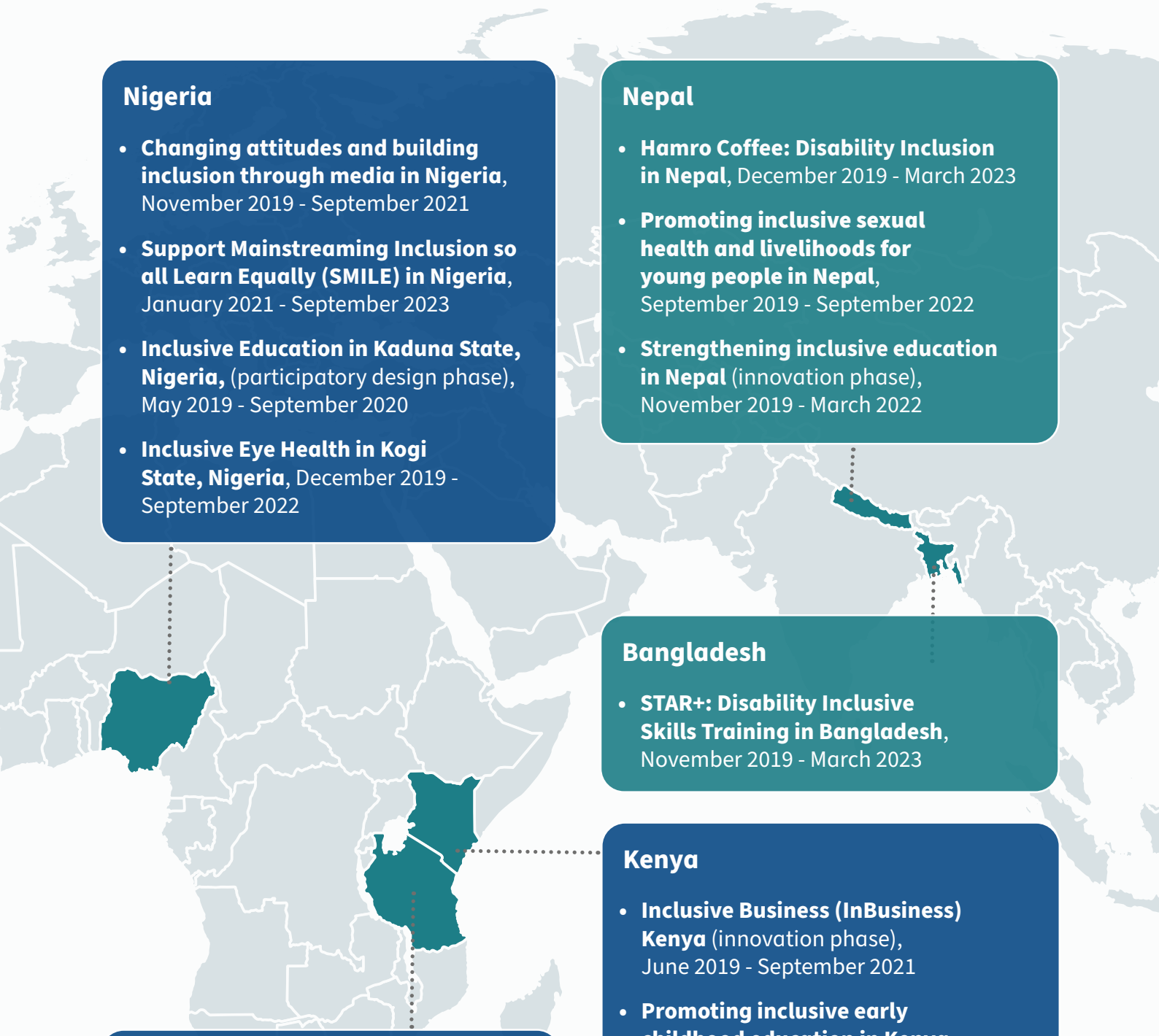
Methodology

This learning summary is the result of a mixed methods learning review:

- Desk review, conducted September to October 2023. 62 project documents including adaptation logs, learning papers and reports
- Key informant interviews, October and November 2023. Key informants were drawn from consortium management and programme management teams

We completed an internal summary of findings in December 2023 and outlined the six key principles for publication. We engaged the consortium and programme management team for review between February and June 2024.

Our twelve projects during the innovation phase were:



Nigeria

- **Changing attitudes and building inclusion through media in Nigeria**, November 2019 - September 2021
- **Support Mainstreaming Inclusion so all Learn Equally (SMILE) in Nigeria**, January 2021 - September 2023
- **Inclusive Education in Kaduna State, Nigeria,** (participatory design phase), May 2019 - September 2020
- **Inclusive Eye Health in Kogi State, Nigeria**, December 2019 - September 2022

Nepal

- **Hamro Coffee: Disability Inclusion in Nepal**, December 2019 - March 2023
- **Promoting inclusive sexual health and livelihoods for young people in Nepal**, September 2019 - September 2022
- **Strengthening inclusive education in Nepal** (innovation phase), November 2019 - March 2022

Bangladesh

- **STAR+: Disability Inclusive Skills Training in Bangladesh**, November 2019 - March 2023

Kenya

- **Inclusive Business (InBusiness) Kenya** (innovation phase), June 2019 - September 2021
- **Promoting inclusive early childhood education in Kenya**, February 2020 - December 2023

Tanzania

- **Changing attitudes and building inclusion through media in Tanzania**, April 2019 - August 2019
- **Strengthening inclusive education in Tanzania** (preparatory phase), August 2019 - December 2020

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Principles for inclusion

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Our role as an OPD in the steering committee is to bring about more inclusion, increase participation of persons with disabilities and make sure that projects designed are more inclusive and the voices of persons with disability are heard… Members of the community are now seeing persons with disability in the driving seat, addressing issues that affect them.

Risikat Toyin Muhammed, Women with Disability Self Reliance Foundation

1 Be ambitious – build inclusion into every phase

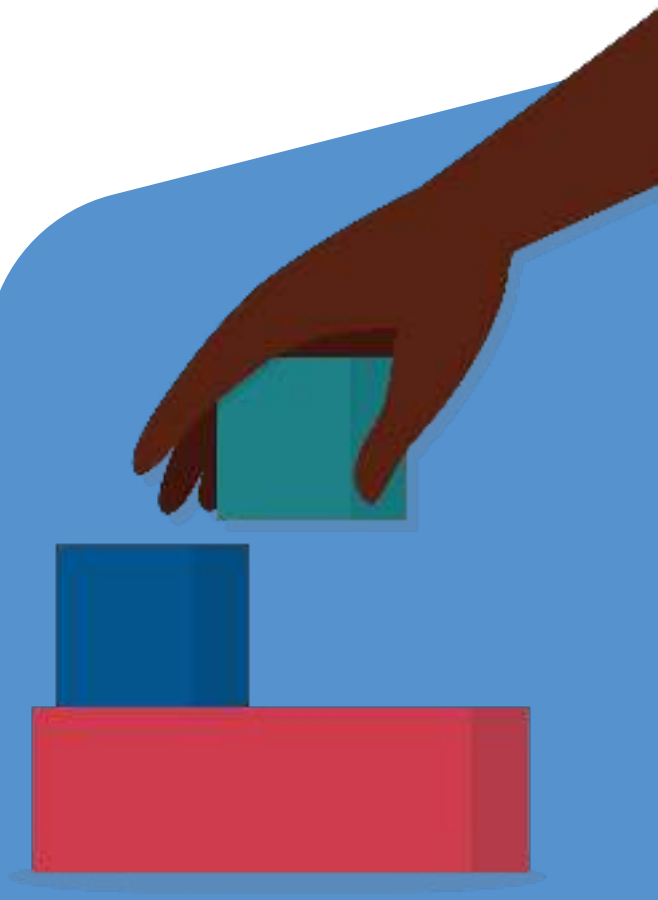
We learnt that projects and partners need to start with the intention to be as inclusive as possible, otherwise it is unlikely to happen. Inclusive Futures projects did this in a few diverse ways:

Set inclusive intentions

Inclusive development is not a one-off consideration: it requires thought at every stage of a project. We found that documenting clear and specific commitments to inclusion at the beginning of our projects set a solid foundation for inclusive practices throughout. For example, we co-developed engagement plans and memorandums of understanding for how we would work with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). During project inductions, partner organisations discussed and explored how to meet their responsibilities in all activities, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[7]

Our commitment to involving OPDs extensively in project work was both practical and effective. In Nigeria we funded a participatory design phase for our inclusive education project, where international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and OPDs worked together to design the project, OPDs shared decision-making on the final proposal, and then joined the project working group (and later the steering committee), taking a leading role in implementation.[8]

> [We] created a benchmark for engagement of organisations of persons with disabilities… [by] making sure that OPDs were part of the development cycle.
>
> **Dorodi Sharma, senior adviser, International Disability Alliance**



Plan for different needs

Planning for reasonable accommodation and adaptations to project activities and programme management ensures that everyone can participate equally, which is a cornerstone of inclusive practice. During the project planning stages we set time and human resources aside for making reasonable accommodations.

"Reasonable accommodation is necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms." United Nations (2006) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Article 2.[9]

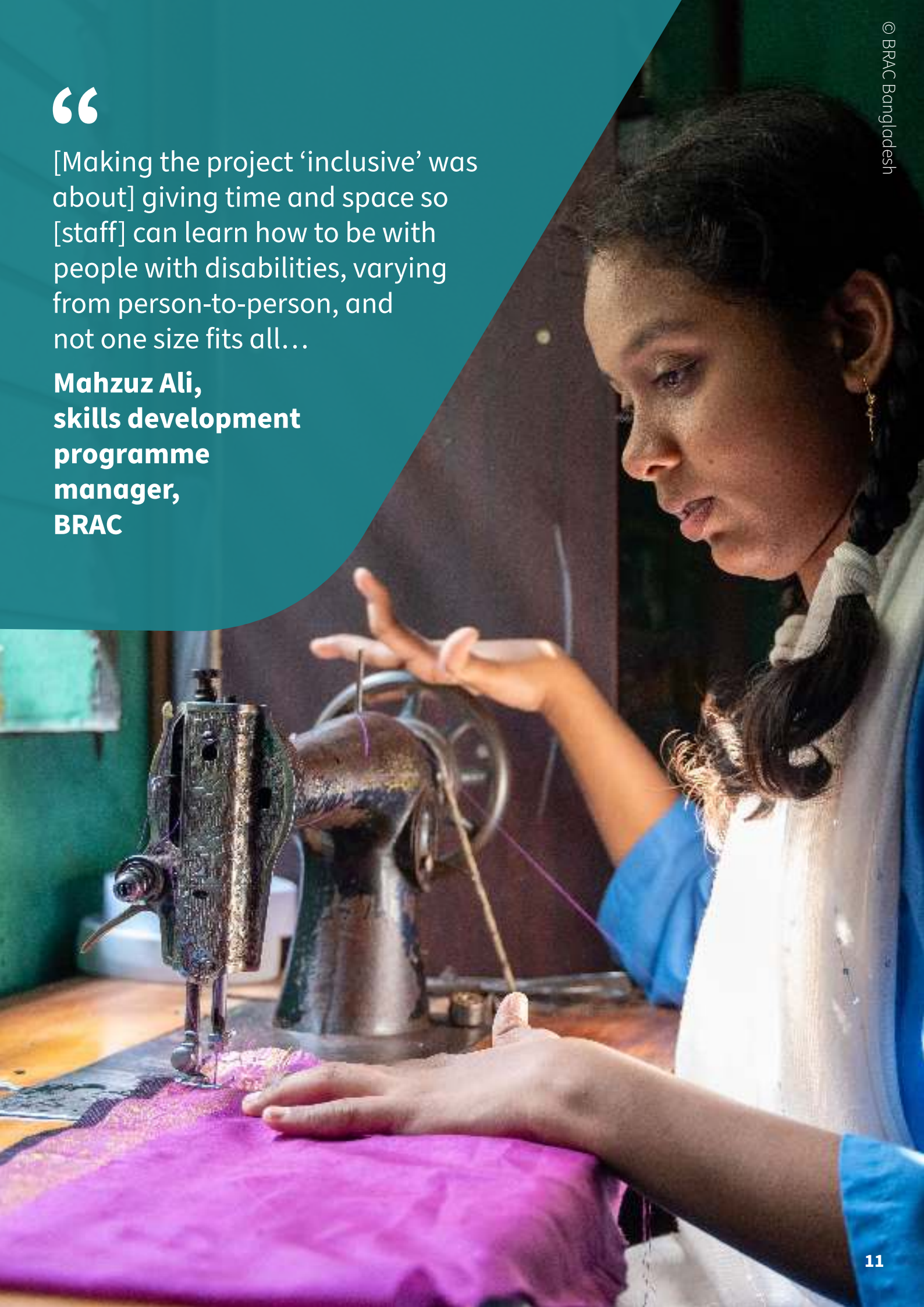
Common examples of reasonable accommodation

Do not assume – ask in advance! Everyone has different needs so we would ask several weeks or months before a meeting or activity what participants required to take part equally. This enabled us to respond to specific reasonable accommodation requests and adapt to local contexts.

Common examples include:

- Paying for private, accessible, safe transport
- Addressing digital barriers such as reimbursing data costs
- Building in extra time for all participants to complete activities
- Providing personal assistive equipment including white canes, wheelchairs and spectacles
- Adapting communications materials into accessible formats such as easy read or large print
- Sending meeting agendas, presentations and documents for review well in advance of deadlines
- Supporting a carer or assistant to attend by paying for travel and/or time if they are otherwise unpaid
- Offering sign language interpretation
- Offering local language interpretation
- Selecting venues with accessible features including entrances, washrooms, seating and fire exits

Reasonably accommodating each person can require ongoing adjustments. Design feedback mechanisms with accessibility in mind to ensure everyone who wants to can give feedback and aim to respond or act on all feedback you receive.



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[Making the project ‘inclusive’ was about] giving time and space so [staff] can learn how to be with people with disabilities, varying from person-to-person, and not one size fits all…

Mahzuz Ali, skills development programme manager, BRAC

Make safeguarding plans participatory

Effective safeguarding for people with disabilities must use participatory approaches. Through participation, we aimed to understand the specific barriers and risks people with disabilities can face and mitigate them through careful planning and continuous monitoring. People with disabilities, especially women and children with disabilities, are more likely to experience abuse than people without disabilities, and face more barriers to reporting and accessing support services. Integrating inclusive safeguarding into project cycle management allows projects to assess, address and monitor risks of harm, exploitation and abuse facing people with disabilities. Working in low-income areas with marginalised communities, including in humanitarian settings, increases the likelihood of safeguarding cases to feature disability intersecting with poverty, neglect, and a lack of access to support services.

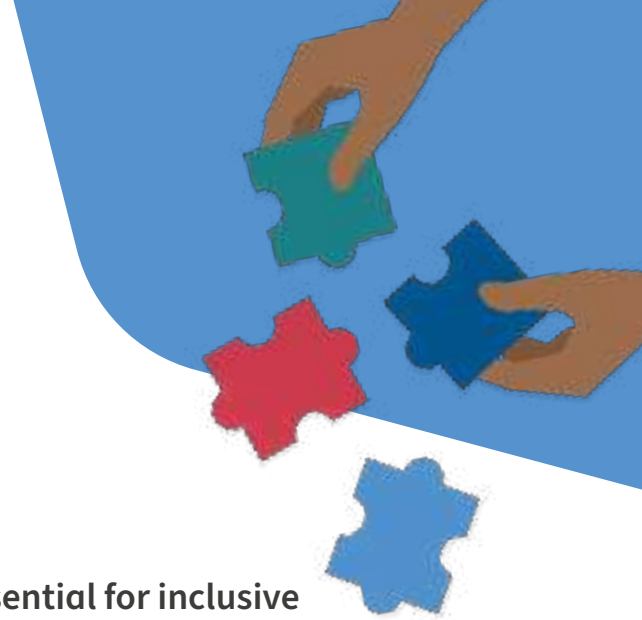
We made safeguarding in our projects inclusive by design. We reviewed each project's design and budget to ensure safeguarding was planned for and properly resourced. This included allocating a "survivor support" line in project budgets as well as in the central programme budget. For example, when a serious safeguarding case was reported in the last month of a project, our central programme budget allowed us to cover survivor support and our partner organisation generously agreed to provide in-person support. Alongside budget, for each project we mapped local and national support services and asked about the accessibility and inclusivity of these services. We also completed risk assessments and training during the startup phase of each project and updated these regularly.

We also approached safeguarding in an inclusive, participatory way. OPDs co-led workshops with people with disabilities, focusing on what made people feel safe and unsafe. In these workshops, people with disabilities frequently cited that bullying and verbal abuse from peers and neighbours made them feel unsafe – particularly when travelling on public transport. This showed that addressing negative stereotyping, stigma and discrimination in communities was critical to effective inclusive safeguarding. We then integrated safeguarding into planned community engagement and outreach with OPD partners as a cost-effective way to mitigate risks of harm and abuse. We also worked with OPDs to mitigate risk by establishing safer travel options, including accompaniment and pick-up / drop-off for public transport to a project.

> "If there are only persons without disabilities at the time of planning, then how could they think about those risks or those hazards? The people with disabilities are the ones who are going to face it. […] So, if you find those risks or hazards or harm[ful] activities at the beginning [by collaborating with people with disabilities], then we can go through with the mitigating measures.

Pramila Neupane, executive director of Autism Chitwan Care Society, Nepal

2 If it's not working – change it!



Responding to what works and what doesn't is essential for inclusive programming. The Inclusive Futures contract with UK aid is based on adaptive management, giving us flexibility to refine our approach to inclusion.

"Lots of things didn't work! Because of the nature of [the programme design]… we could adapt and change our way of working… to suit what was needed.

Annie Hans, programme inclusion coordinator, Humanity & Inclusion

Flexibility can maximise inclusion

Adaptive management focuses on achieving change (outcomes) and takes a flexible approach to activities (outputs). Our desired change was improved outcomes for people with disabilities in work, education and health care, and addressing negative stereotyping and discrimination. We used ongoing feedback from people with disabilities, monitoring and evaluation data, and on-the-job reflections from OPDs and consortium partners to gather programme evidence. If something wasn't working and we wanted to stop it, we would make a change and record it. While it helped us stay on track towards the change we wanted, it was sometimes a challenge for project and finance teams to work with so much flexibility, adapting previously rigid finance, reporting and project management systems and embracing a new adaptive culture.

Being flexible allowed us to apply evidence and learning to adapt activities and achieve better outcomes for people with disabilities, for example:

- We worked with women with disabilities to identify specific adaptations to standard project delivery to better include them, including funding the transport and lunch for someone to care for their child/ren, and a space for childcare, during training
- We took extra time to arrange work placements for skills graduates with more severe impairments to ensure the hosts were set up and supported to meet the graduates' access needs
- We adjusted the upper-age limit for our early education projects as children with disabilities often start school at a later age than children without disabilities
- We lifted the education level requirement for participants who were deafblind applying for our micro-entrepreneurship project, as we found very few had accessed secondary education

> Some of the key lessons [we have learned] are in terms of intensive training for the micro-entrepreneurs on business development skills…We learned that women participants are missing out on the classroom setup because of home chores that will make them late to arrive at the classroom or not appear for the training. So we have learned that there's a need for intensive follow-up for [these] participants. And to offer support to [them] where they are.
>
> **Lucy Murage, Head of programmes, Light for the World, Kenya**

Address multiple barriers with diverse approaches

We often needed to adapt or widen the scope of our planned inclusion work to achieve full participation, using complementary approaches to address the systemic challenges faced by people with disabilities.

We trialled a mix of approaches to increase the number of children with disabilities in school in our inclusive early childhood education project in Kenya – developing and distributing a positive parenting manual, holding parent-teacher discussions about early childhood development education, and linking learning support assistants in school to parents and caregivers. When some parents told us they still preferred to keep their child with a disability at home, or at a disability-specialist (segregated) school, we integrated their concerns and preferences into an awareness-raising campaign. This focused on the right every child has to an education, with examples from local mainstream schools of the positive inclusion steps they had taken.

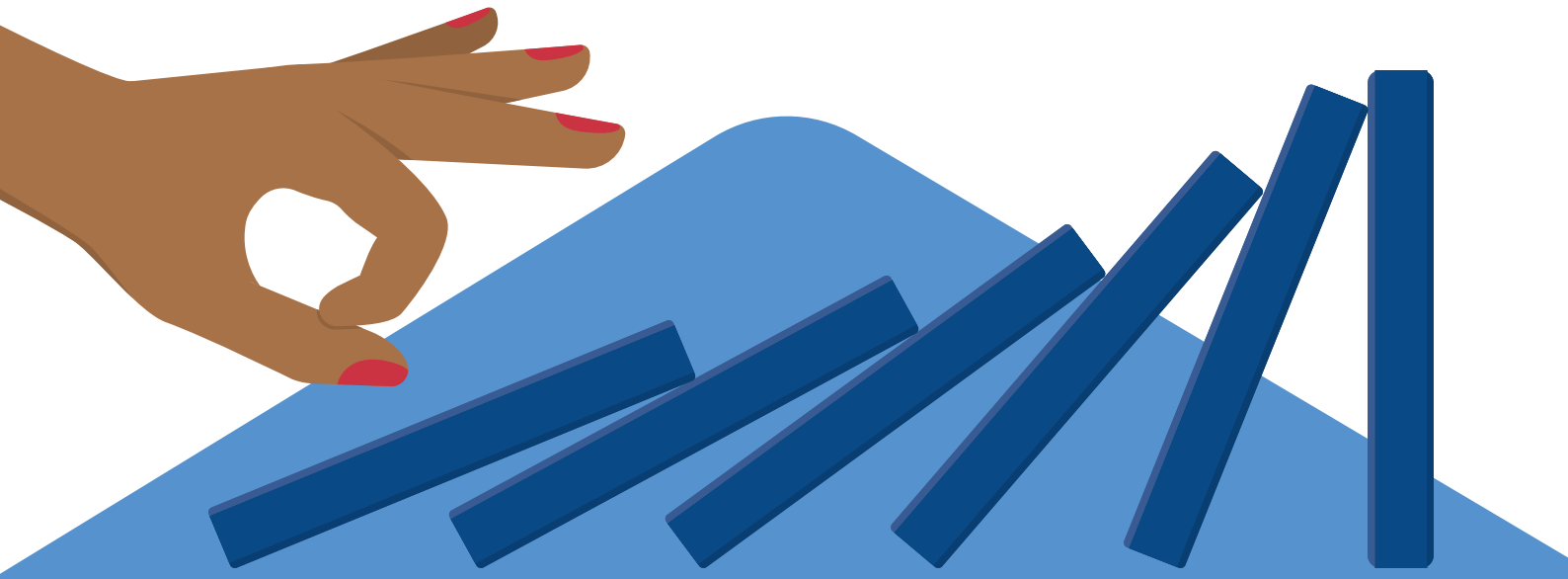
We also used the innovation phase of projects to learn more about intersectional inclusion, including the reasons why **women and girls with disabilities** might be excluded from meaningfully participating in a project. We sought gender-balanced representation in steering committees, trainings, and workshops, and including gender-specific barriers in accessibility audits of health facilities and school. However, overcoming power differences and addressing intersectional barriers to engagement amongst women and girls with disabilities needs an explicit focus and deliberate planning, so we developed gender mainstreaming guidance for projects when they started to scale up after their innovation phase.

3 Shatter stereotypes and break down barriers

Through the innovation phase of our programme, we aimed to address negative stereotyping, discrimination and stigma, including through raising awareness of disability rights.

Offer training to leaders, frontline staff and community members

We ran training to embed good practice in disability inclusion and address common myths, stereotypes and misconceptions. Training was co-designed and co-led with people with disabilities, and tailored for different groups: people with national and community-level influence and decision-making roles; families and caregivers of people with disabilities; and frontline staff from education and health care. Curricula focused on the experiences, rights and needs of people with disabilities building on the Social Model of Disability[10] and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[11] We learnt to start with the basics – to not assume previous knowledge or experience – and to facilitate spaces where questions can be asked, and assumptions respectfully challenged.



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Respect and value lived experience

Engaging OPDs and people with disabilities in our awareness-raising work boosted both reach and impact, because of several key OPD strengths:

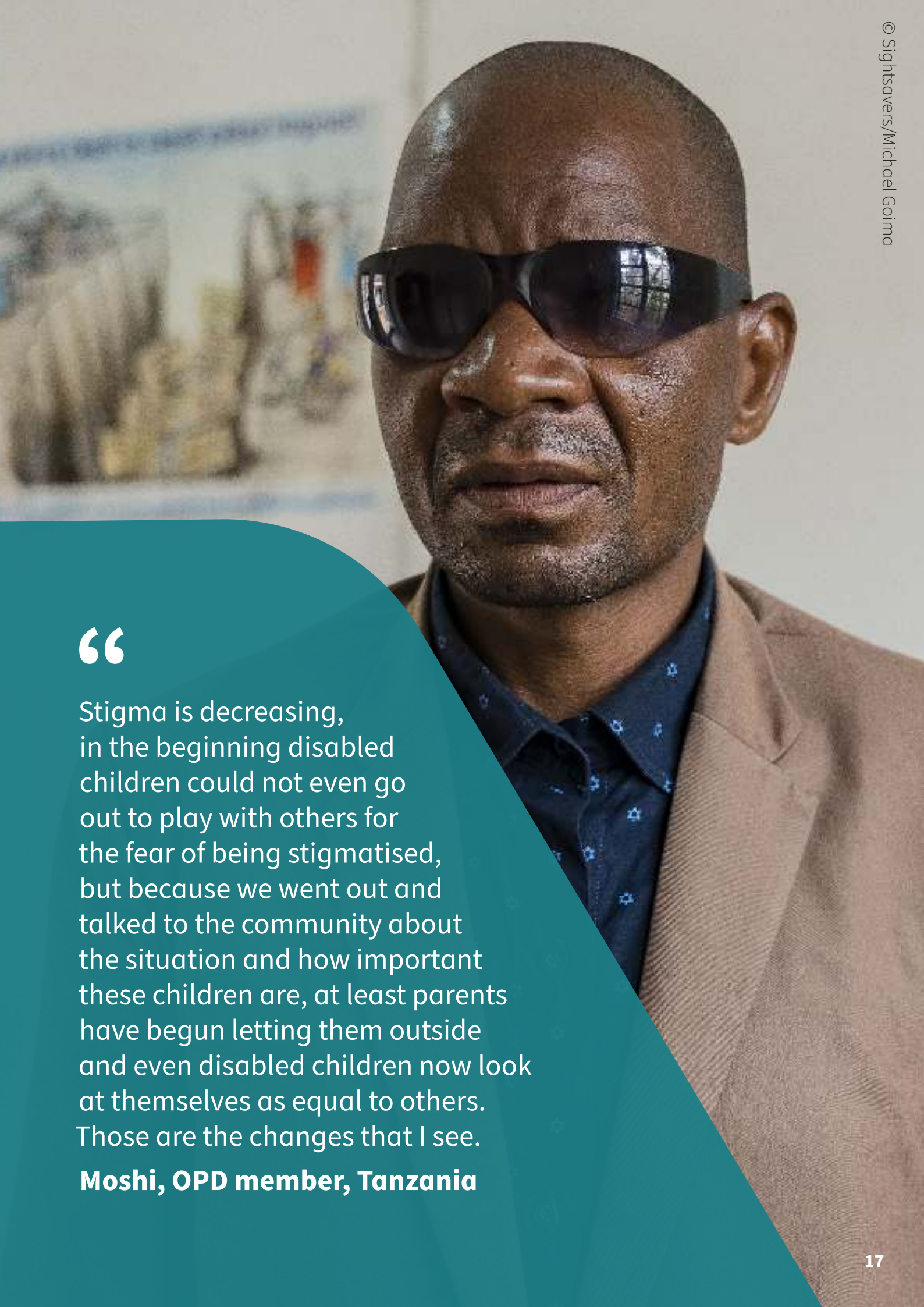
- Their personal experience of inclusion issues in their communities meant they could identify challenges and recommend solutions
- Being embedded in local communities, they used their networks to reach families, care givers, service staff and local decision makers with inclusion messaging and advocacy
- Their position as a community member made them relatable and approachable

We found that when people with disabilities hold active and independent professional roles within the community, negative stereotyping is challenged.

Review and repeat over time

We learned that addressing discrimination, stereotyping and stigma was a critical part of delivering inclusive projects, even though some of our projects were designed to be short and therefore not long enough to demonstrate a lasting change in reducing these attitudes or behaviours. As a neglected area of development, having space to try new approaches is crucial for learning how to implement disability inclusion.

We integrated stigma reduction into project activities, such as outreach, to reach our goal – improving outcomes, equity and access for people with disabilities. However, we focused on measuring indicators of this goal related to health, education and employment, rather than measuring the effectiveness of stigma reduction directly. We ended this phase of our programme with uncertainty about the effectiveness of our specific approaches so we are investing in further research and learning on stigma reduction, with the results to be published in 2025.



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Stigma is decreasing, in the beginning disabled children could not even go out to play with others for the fear of being stigmatised, but because we went out and talked to the community about the situation and how important these children are, at least parents have begun letting them outside and even disabled children now look at themselves as equal to others. Those are the changes that I see.

Moshi, OPD member, Tanzania

4 Collect precise data and track your spending on inclusion

Information about who your participants are, how your project is going and how much inclusion costs are critical parts of achieving disability inclusion in a development project.

Build on existing data

It is a basic requirement for an inclusive programme to reliably identify the people with disabilities in its participating population. We found that existing disability data is often limited in coverage, consistency and quality. An inclusive project should aim to strengthen in-country data collection about people with disabilities rather than creating parallel structures, for example by developing bespoke data management and storage systems.

In our SMILE project in Nigeria, we sought to strengthen local data systems by involving headteachers and other school staff in the process of screening children with disabilities, incorporating screening into the existing school enrolment process to help the administration run smoothly, and strengthening school staff capacity to collect reliable data about children with disabilities.

> What's different about the project is the inclusiveness. I must say, that has been so different from other projects… I've been part of the steering committee for the project, and then aside from that we have been doing a whole lot within the project cycle. We plan the project, the work, together. We are also, part of the advocacy for this program. And then some of us are also part of the data collectors.
>
> **Victoria Oye Ocheni, The Albino Foundation, Nigeria**

Collect good quality, purposeful data

In our innovation phase projects, we used the **Washington Group sets of questions** to measure the degree to which a person experiences functional limitations amassing to a disability. We found the **Child Functioning Module** useful to accurately identify children with functional difficulties in projects, providing a foundation for further assessments and referrals, and informing plans for individual support needs.

We collected data through door-to-door surveys, health centres and health camps and during school enrolment. We needed to pilot and monitor our data collection to address any challenges or confusion, such as inconsistent use of questions, misinterpretation of question intent or translation issues. We recruited trained data collectors or provided training to school and health centre staff to explain both the data collection purpose and method, and disability inclusion values and rights.

Disaggregate data to know more about who is included – or excluded

Disaggregating disability data further by age, gender, and impairment type, helped us to understand the specific situation, experiences and needs of diverse groups of people. We used this data to design specific project interventions and make appropriate reasonable accommodations, including for **women with disabilities**.

Design data collection to be accessible

Data must also be collected in accessible and inclusive ways so that everyone can take part. We made reasonable accommodations such as allotting extra time or ensuring a personal assistant was present. We produced accessible and easy read consent forms to clearly explain the purpose of any data collection.

In our inclusive education project in Tanzania, OPDs and consortium partners trained peer researchers (women and men with disabilities) in participatory research methods. They then designed data collection tools, led interviews and focus group discussions, before analysing the findings. Their findings shaped the project design to best respond to people with disabilities in the local area.

Budget deliberately and flexibly for inclusion

It is a commonly held misconception that improving inclusion will cost a lot of money. We found that while we did not need to spend much more for inclusion, we did need budget flexibility and knowledge of available government funding schemes to financially support each project to reach its inclusion goals.

> [T]he flex for moving budgets around has been hugely beneficial… [when] we realised 'we don't need to do X activity, but this would be more useful…
>
> **Lucy Reeve, programme manager - disability inclusion, Sightsavers**

We adjusted our financial systems to capture spending on inclusive budgeting, for example, by including a budget line on reasonable accommodation. This made it possible to analyse costs over time and understand value for money. We needed to budget for reasonable accommodation not just to include project participants at the activity level, but any staff or governance partners at the programme level.

Reasonable accommodation was an important part of our spending on inclusion. We needed the budget flexibility to respond to specific requirements from each participant with a disability about how they can fully participate. We learned to invest earlier rather than later and to think through the costs of including people with disabilities in each planned activity, both in terms of staff time and direct expenditure. These costs included:

- Purchasing assistive devices
- Procuring third-party services such as interpreters
- Sourcing accessible venues or adapting venues to be more accessible
- Reimbursing travel and data costs for participants and personal assistants

Each person's access needs are different. Budget flexibility meant we could allocate spending according to actual requirements without having to specify in advance what it would be used for. We combined this with information about government budgets that could be available to cover reasonable accommodation costs in the longer term. For example, in our inclusive coffee livelihoods project in Nepal, our assessment found that nearly half of the farmers taking part required assistive devices to ensure they could fully participate. We advocated for access to municipal government funds to cover the longer-term cost of these, such as maintenance.

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> Coffee does not need grazing. I just need to tend the saplings once a day, fertilize, water, prune and remove weeds. And the plants produce crops for many years… Coffee farming is for all. And we, people with disabilities, can stake a claim.
>
> **Sasmita, coffee farmer, Nepal**

Refocus value for money to include equity

Development interventions cannot be considered good value for money if they exclude people with disabilities. We found that traditional framing of value for money included economy (getting low costs for quality goods and services), efficiency (focusing on great service delivery) and effectiveness (reaching the outcomes you set out to). To capture inclusion, we also focused on – and aimed to measure – equity (distributing benefits fairly), which helped frame value for money not just around 'did we reach as many people as cheaply and effectively as possible?' but also 'did we leave no one behind?'[12] We plan to produce further learning about our inclusive budgeting approach with projects now at scale, to be published in 2025.

5 Capture changes and tell your story

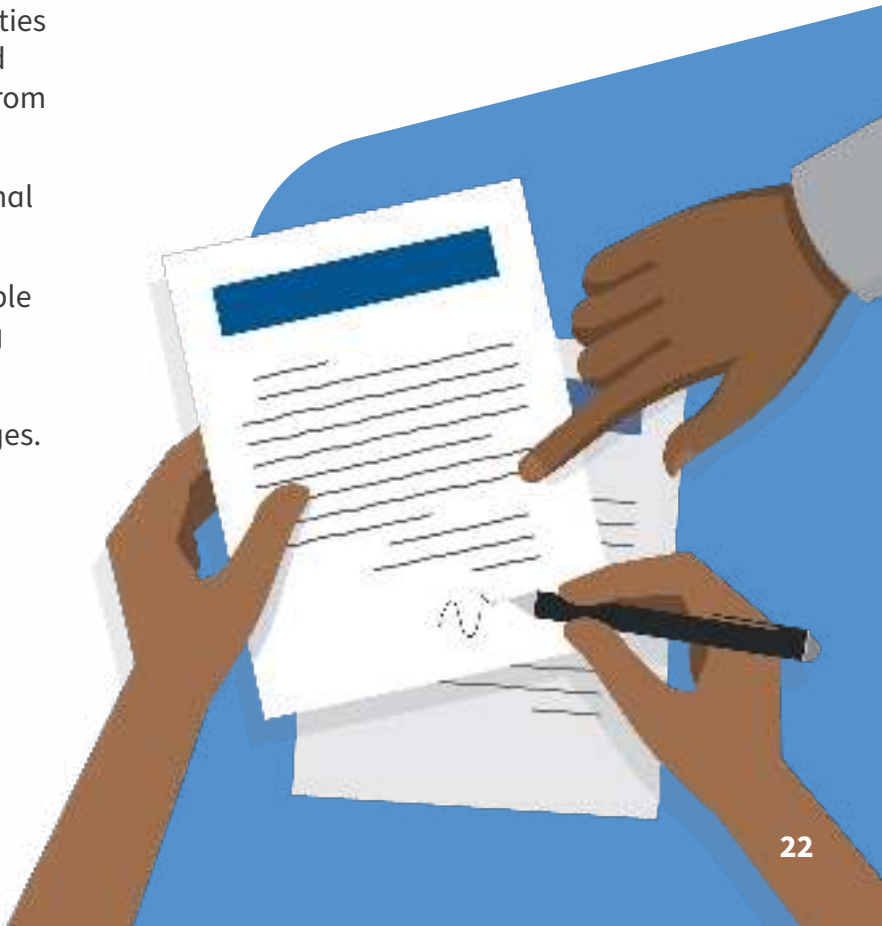
We found it challenging but important to monitor and capture all our adaptation and inclusion efforts, without creating an undue burden of reporting. We needed to continually reflect on what we were measuring and reporting – to make sure we were capturing what's important and filtering out what's not.

We ran participatory design workshops with OPDs and people with disabilities, the local community and project influencers, to agree on the long-term inclusion goal that each project contributed to. We set measurable outcomes, including:

- Increased access for people with disabilities to services
- Participation of people with disabilities in activities, communities, and services beyond the project
- Self-reported changes in attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities by people without disabilities, combined with qualitative and quantitative data from people with disabilities
- Improved economic, health or educational situation for people with disabilities
- Comparisons in outcomes between people with and without disabilities, measuring how much we have 'narrowed the gap'

However, we encountered several challenges. Firstly, some inclusion outcomes relied on self-reported changes, such as changes in attitudes or behaviour. These can be impacted by social desirability bias, so we combined these with other data sources to give a more accurate picture.

Secondly, at times, we found it challenging to measure how inclusive a project was in its delivery. Our focus on the quality of participation and meaningful engagement with a range of OPDs, including women-led or women-focused OPDs, wasn't an outcome we measured by itself, and yet it was critical for the integrity of the project. We were measuring the number of engagements, rather than the quality of participation or the steps taken to ensure each person could fully participate. We found that gathering quotes and case studies brought this more to life.



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When I look at myself, I see there is a very big improvement. About a year ago, I would only make one or two dollars a day. Right now, I am able to relate well with customers, and able to effectively price the services and products that I sell. In a good month, I am able to make $400 USD... When I meet a person with a disability, I see their potential and encourage them to see it [too].

Titus, graphic designer and microentrepreneur, Kenya.

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Thirdly, we didn’t always know at the start about the wider, unexpected changes that a project can bring about. This made it more difficult to measure change in traditional ways, such as by comparing baselines and endlines. For example, in our inclusive livelihoods project in Kenya, microentrepreneurs reported that as well as increasing business income, which was one of our measures of success, they also felt more confident to challenge stigma and discrimination in their local community. This is significant, yet we hadn’t set out to generate evidence on it.

Fourthly, as the innovation phase of our programme was deliberately brief, we were limited in gathering evidence that each project had resulted in long-lasting, sustainable change. Inclusion is not a quick fix and outcome measurements are more reliable if we can take them over a longer period, and from longer projects that can embed sustainable changes. We aim to use the scale phase (running until March 2026) of our projects to explore this.

Inclusive projects need to be creative and pragmatic about how to measure and communicate change. Existing tools and approaches might not be appropriate or may need to be adapted. Flexibility is needed to capture changes that were not expected.

6 Don't try to do it alone – form partnerships

Working in partnership is crucial to inclusive development. For a successful partnership, collaboration needs to be deliberate, and all partners need to be open to changing and trying innovative approaches. Each partner needs to be willing to put their own organisational priorities to one side to build a shared inclusion approach.

Work alongside OPDs and people with disabilities

Working alongside OPDs and people with disabilities is an essential requirement for effective inclusion. Organisations should become disability-inclusive employers and include people with disabilities within hired staff teams.

Working with OPDs can also be a catalyst for inclusive development. In our inclusive eye health project in Nigeria, OPDs took charge of mobilising people with disabilities. Their work involved raising awareness among people with disabilities through OPD networks and different disability clusters, including persons with albinism, physical impairments, hearing impairments, visual impairments, and intellectual and psycho-social disabilities. OPDs made campaign adverts, appeared on radio shows, and engaged in direct advocacy with local government representatives. There was a significant increase in the number of people with disabilities attending eye clinics during the project period.

> A few years on [from the start of the innovation phase] … it's not just the OPD partner who has to say, 'what about meaningful engagement?' but other [Inclusive Futures] partners are mentioning it – this is a real achievement.
>
> **Dorodi Sharma, senior adviser, International Disability Alliance**

“

My involvement in this project enabled me to learn about the issues faced by people with disabilities and the steps to amend them. I also got an opportunity to inform and educate about sexual reproductive health at the community level… I had a successful relationship with the government and non-government representatives in the communities.

Nanda, focal point, Nepal

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Work with decision-makers

Working with local and national decision-makers can promote long-term ownership of inclusive development. We delivered joint activities with local authorities such as health screening camps and accessibility audits. They took roles on project steering committees along with OPDs, took part in disability inclusion training, and engaged in discussions and commitments about sustaining inclusion once the projects closed. For example, our inclusive sexual health and livelihoods project in Nepal brought in a focal point to sit in municipal offices, to be available for young people with disabilities seeking information about sexual health services. After observing first-hand the importance of the inclusion-focused role, the local deputy mayor committed to continued funding.[13]

“

The project and its findings have shown us that inclusive [sexual and reproductive health and rights work] can be done. The project did what the government should do, and it gives us information on what we should ask the government.

OPD representative, Nepal

However, when working with local and national government we did need to navigate bureaucratic processes which took longer than planned, and rebuild relationships when local government partners were relocated.

Work together

Our innovation phase was delivered by a consortium of partners, where mainstream organisations collaborated with disability specialist organisations, receiving technical support to make existing programmes disability inclusive and to evolve their organisational practices. The International Disability Alliance, an alliance of global and regional OPDs, formed part of the programme governance, and partnerships in country provided valuable contextualisation and access to existing networks. Through partnering with inclusion specialists, mainstream organisations introduced more inclusive practices to their work that have endured beyond project closure.[14]

In our inclusive media and communication project in Nigeria, BBC Media Action paired with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) which specialises in participatory research. IDS's support and upfront training led the project to adopt more accessible language in its research and recruitment tool, change the research approach for some disability clusters and make reasonable accommodations including interpretation for deaf participants.

> Bringing together different organisations who have a different focus and organisational practices… was a huge plus. Consortium working – thinking outside your own organisational frame and being open – has definitely been a big success.
>
> **Johannes Trimmel, programme director, Sightsavers**

Partnerships with OPDs, local and national decision-makers, and other organisations, can catalyse and sustain efforts to make each development project more inclusive.

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Conclusion

Since Inclusive Futures was launched in 2018, we have helped transform the lives of over three million people with disabilities in six countries in Africa and Asia. We've proved that disability inclusive development is possible – and that it works. To drive change at the scale required to reach up to 16% of the world's population[15], we now need professionals working across the global development sector to use what we've learned and put these six game-changing principles into practice.

Find out more

Inclusive Futures has produced learning in a range of different areas to help development professionals build disability inclusion into their work. See **inclusivefutures.org/resources-and-learning**

Disability Inclusive Development – Inclusive Futures consortium

ADD International | BBC Media Action | BRAC | Humanity & Inclusion | The Institute of Development Studies | International Disability Alliance | Leonard Cheshire | Light for the World | Sense International | Sightsavers | Social Development Direct

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