



Inclusive Futures
Promoting disability inclusion



Partnering for disability inclusion

How local authorities, non-governmental organisations and organisations of people with disabilities form effective partnerships to strengthen disability inclusion

Cover photo: Community members in Bangladesh during a community awareness session about disability inclusion. Credit: Ayesha Islam, BRAC

Photo on page 8: A coffee farmer from the Disability Inclusive Coffee Project in Nepal. Credit: Cordaid

Photo on page 9: Community members and project staff in Bangladesh during a community awareness session about disability inclusion. Credit: Kazi Tasnim Tanzeen, BRAC

Photo on page 11: OPD member Moshi Bucheyeki Enos stands outside the OPD office in Shinyanga, Tanzania. Credit: Sightsavers

Photo on page 12: An accessibility audit of a health facility in Nepal. Credit: Humanity and Inclusion.

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Inclusive Futures

Inclusive Futures is a six-year disability-inclusive initiative. It is made up of consortium partners (working in development, academia, business and media) and organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda.

It is the flagship UK aid disability-inclusion programme. It helps people with disabilities by improving their access to work, education and healthcare. It also tackles stigma and discrimination faced by people with disabilities. Through its work, Inclusive Futures develops evidence, research and resources on how to include people with disabilities in development and humanitarian programmes.

The examples of partnering in this document are from Inclusive Futures projects. The timescale of projects varies from six months to

four years (including pauses during Covid-19) between 2018-2022. The projects have enabled Inclusive Futures to gather learning and evidence about what does and does not work in disability-inclusive development.

The projects in this report include: Bangladesh Inclusive Vocational Training and Youth Employment; Bangladesh Inclusive Education (primary); Kenya Inclusive Education (early childhood); Nepal Inclusive Education (early childhood); Nepal Inclusive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Livelihood Opportunities; Nepal Inclusive Livelihoods (coffee); Nigeria Inclusive Education (primary); Nigeria Inclusive Eye Health services; and Tanzania Inclusive Education (pre-primary and primary).



Context

Effective development programmes need partnerships, particularly at local levels, to achieve localisation,¹ and the inclusion of people with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs).

This brief makes the case for partnerships and development programmes across all sectors to be disability inclusive.

There are more than 1 billion people with disabilities worldwide, about 16% of the population.² People with disabilities, as part of the population, are present in every development programmes, across every sector.



It is a shared responsibility amongst partners to ensure development programmes are inclusive, and it's every government body's responsibility to ensure inclusivity of its services and policy. The full and meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities across all sectors of public life

is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006).³

There remains a gap in the realisation of legal rights for people with disabilities. Development programmes across health, education and livelihoods, including in low- and middle-

income countries, continue to fall short on inclusion. The programmes fail to reach the most marginalised, including people with disabilities. Lack of disability inclusion by any partner in a development programme

strengthens an exclusionary status quo and reinforces harmful social and cultural norms. The excuses are well known and are no longer acceptable.⁴

If it's not inclusive, it's not effective!



The use of the term 'partnerships' in this brief encompasses ways of working that are transactional and transformative, such as collaborative working to design, deliver or

evaluate services, policies or programmes. Collaborative working in these partnerships takes time and requires resources, which need to be planned for at the start of a project.

The use of the term 'partnerships' also suggests an equitable balance of power between partners, with respect and recognition of each partner's unique strengths and responsibilities, and a shared interest to learn from each other.



Partnerships must be disability inclusive in their ways of working, including providing reasonable accommodation, to ensure every partner can participate equitably. They must

also have a commitment to meaningful engagement of people with disabilities and their representative organisations throughout.

This brief focuses specifically on the partnerships between local authorities, OPDs and NGOs in disability inclusive projects.



It acknowledges the range of Inclusive Futures partnerships and chooses to focus on local partnerships, in recognition of their potential for greater sustainability and promotion of a localisation agenda. Partnerships in the Inclusive Futures consortium also include academic and research institutes, global disability networks, national authorities, private sector businesses and public sector services.

The three types of partners mentioned in this brief are:

- **Organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs).** OPDs function as representative bodies of people with disabilities. OPDs

include international networks; national umbrella groups; local, grassroots groups; and impairment groups.⁵ Not all people with disabilities are members of an OPD, and not all impairment types are represented by OPDs in every area. OPDs also have wider roles beyond disability inclusion in development projects, such as running self-help groups or advocacy campaigns. Partnerships with OPDs need to be meaningful and effective,⁶ with meaningful participation described as: "...building a dynamic relationship based on partnership and not considering consultation as a one-off event."⁷

- **Local authorities.** The structure and function of local authorities vary by country and region. Local authorities have a vital role to play in the provision of services such as education and health services. They also have other responsibilities, including revenue generation, maintenance and development of public buildings and roads, and transport schemes. Their focus aligns with localisation values, while maintaining the link with national bodies such as ministries and departments. Local authorities can and must mainstream disability inclusion throughout all policy and services areas, not just those specific to disability.
- **Non-governmental organisations (NGOs).** NGOs work independent of, or alongside, government services. Development-focused NGOs tend to focus on issues, such as supporting women and girl’s empowerment, or they work across a range of sectors, such as health and education. The majority of NGOs in the Inclusive Futures consortium deliver projects across multiple countries and are therefore recognised as being ‘international’.

Partnership dynamics vary across the countries where Inclusive Futures has drawn examples from for this report. In some countries, there are power dynamics within and between international and national NGOs, different OPD movements, and local and national authorities.⁸ Local authorities in some contexts may not hold decision-making power or final responsibility in a partnership, as this may rest in a more senior role or department at national level. These caveats notwithstanding, the findings in this report remain relevant and important in highlighting the collective responsibility to leave no one behind.⁹

The findings can be used by development partners, local and national authorities and OPDs to form and strengthen effective partnerships and projects that promote, instil and drive the commitment forward for disability inclusion.



Methodology

The learning in this report has been collated from projects in the Inclusive Futures programme. This includes a desk review of quarterly project reports and case studies. Partnership themes were identified with keywords. The themes were sense-checked,

and the accuracy of case studies were refined through additional questions to project leads and OPD partners, where needed, and through the technical review of select partners prior to publication.



How we built partnerships for disability inclusion

Action 1: Build shared understanding from the start

A partnership for disability inclusion needs to start with a shared understanding of the project, its partners and disability. This includes an

understanding of disability commitments in national law and policy, and disability inclusion in practice, such as how to meaningfully

engage people with disabilities. A new partnership also needs to counter any negative stereotypes about disability and identify any gaps in disability inclusive practice amongst all partners. The partners can then agree on a shared vision for disability inclusion that the project can cohesively deliver on.

For example, Inclusive Futures conducted an inclusive eye health project in Nigeria. The aim was to make eye health services more accessible for, and inclusive of, people with disabilities. The project began by creating a shared foundation of knowledge and positive attitudes towards disability inclusion with partners, through disability inclusion training.

NGO and OPD partners invited local authority healthcare workers and leaders from the wider community to a disability inclusion training session. Partners also invited state level managers, including the Director for Public Health and the Director of Rehabilitation from the Ministry of Women. OPDs representing national and local branches also attended. The stakeholder training built a shared understanding of disability inclusion and strengthened the network of partners committed to disability inclusion in principle and practice.

As a result of the disability inclusion training, state level managers agreed on disability inclusive commitments that were critical for the success of the project, such as to partner with OPDs during implementation.



They also agreed on commitments beyond the project, such as the impact of the training. These included the commitment to partner with OPD leaders to advocate for the appointment of people with disabilities in state ministries and to improve awareness and sensitisation on

disability inclusion and gender equity amongst government staff. It also resulted in renewed commitment from local authority healthcare workers to deliver inclusive health services with explicit support from the other partners.

Action 2: Agree on roles and responsibilities of each partner

The second action summarises the ways Inclusive Futures has created an environment for collaborative working and learning with disability inclusion as the focus. It also looks at how it brings together partners to agree on their roles and responsibilities.

In our inclusive education project in Nigeria, we established collaborative working through a steering committee, where decision making is shared across partners. We used a term

of reference to outline responsibilities, alternated the chairperson role to create opportunities for shared governance, and had a dedicated budget to cover staff, the hire of a room and reasonable accommodation. The function and roles of the steering committee are explained by Risikat Toyin Muhammed, Executive Director of the Women with Disability Self-Reliance Foundation (Nigeria):

▶▶ I'm a member of the steering committee on inclusive education. I contributed in the committee by giving technical support on issues of disability.

The steering committee is a technical committee on inclusive education, and it comprises of governments, organisations of persons with disability, and other stakeholders.

We collaboratively work with other partners, such as government, state orders and government agencies, like the ministry of education, and school-based management committee at the community level. We share responsibility in decision-making according to issues. On the issues of persons with disability, organisations of persons with disabilities and the [school-based management] committee are at the forefront. When it is issues of policy of governance, the ministries and other government agencies are in charge. ◀◀



In other Inclusive Futures locations, roles and responsibilities were established before collaborative space could be set up. In Nepal, partners are working to strengthen the inclusion of people with disabilities in the coffee value chain. They needed to identify the right authorities to partner with. When NGOs and OPDs approached the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, which focuses on livelihoods, they were redirected to the Ministry of Health and Population, which focuses on disability inclusion, and vice versa.

To resolve this, the lead NGO connected both ministries with the OPD, National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal (NFDN). NFDN provided both ministries with training and guidance on disability inclusion so they were able to clarify their roles and responsibilities when it came to disability inclusion.

As a result of NFDN's guidance, the ministries established disability inclusion coordination committees across local government wards.

The committees tackle the common challenge of cross-ministry and cross-sector collaboration. They bring together relevant decision-makers to better coordinate and implement disability-inclusive projects and policies, and to build partners' expertise on disability inclusion.



As a result of the training and the set up of the committee, OPDs (including NFDN) now have an ongoing platform to advocate to local authorities for greater support for people with disabilities.



Examples of what a partnership between NGOs, local authorities and OPDs can achieve

Example 1: Using partnerships to strengthen government tools and services for inclusion

Partnerships play a key role in strengthening government services to be more inclusive, including at local level. Working with government tools and services to improve inclusion can be more sustainable and impactful than setting up parallel structures.

In some Inclusive Futures projects, partners found that some of the services offered by local authorities are not designed with the needs of

a diverse range of people with disabilities in mind. For example, people with disabilities in Bangladesh are entitled to apply for a Disability Identity Card.¹⁰ This enables them access to government social support schemes, including health and education services, for free or at a lower cost. It also gives them access to positive recruitment opportunities under a government quota scheme.



However, NGO and OPD partners learned that there are challenges when applying for a Disability Identity Card. These include a lack of information about the card and the application process, and an overly bureaucratic application process. OPDs approached the subdistrict social welfare office to raise their concerns about the application process not being accessible for people with disabilities.



Together, they agreed to pilot a streamlined process. OPDs identified people with disabilities who had not completed their applications. They connected them with the subdistrict social welfare service, and provided them with individual support.

NGO partner BRAC also provided information about the Disability Identity Card during home visits to people with disabilities. As a result, 704 people with a disability in the project area completed their Disability Identity Card application and gained access to government social security schemes. At the end of the project, the government issued a letter positioning BRAC to continue its successful role of linking people with disabilities to social welfare offices so that they can complete their Disability Identity Card application.

To ensure disability inclusive projects align and strengthen government – and particularly local level – services, partners in Nepal began mapping locally available services. In the Inclusive Futures inclusive sexual and

reproductive health and rights (SRHR) project in Nepal, NGOs, OPDs and local health authorities partnered on a mapping exercise to identify locally available SRHR services and to discuss the capacity of each service to be disability inclusive, and prioritised the services accordingly.¹¹

OPDs then trained female community health volunteers and local authorities from prioritised services, to provide information and resources on SRHR and on services available. The training included practical activities on how to complete a participatory disability assessment, how to recognise and understand the needs of people with deafblindness, and a rights-based approach to inclusive SRHR.

The partnership, with its focus on assessing and strengthening the disability inclusion in local services, led to an increased number of adolescents obtaining information about local services and an increased number of local healthcare workers improving their knowledge and understanding of disability inclusion and SRHR.

Example 2: Using partnerships to advocate for inclusive policy implementation

Partnerships provide an avenue for direct, tailored and ongoing advocacy with local and national authorities. Through partnership connections, OPDs can be particularly well-positioned to advocate for disability inclusion.

In the Inclusive Education (primary) project in Bangladesh, NGO partners discussed with OPDs how to facilitate advocacy targeted at local and national authorities. As a result, NGO partners

developed a set of assessment criteria,¹² including the OPD's capacity to plan and carry out an advocacy event, the strength of their stakeholder networks, and their capacity to lobby local government for resources to support inclusive services and people with disabilities.

Five OPDs completed a self-assessment, including Rights & Empowerment Organization for Persons with Disabilities, Samonay Adhikar

Protibondhi Sangsta, and Spondan Protibandhi Unnaiyan Sangstha. From the assessment, NGO and OPD partners identified that the main area needing strengthening was influencing local government and school management on

inclusive education, including using disability disaggregated data. The partnership evolved to developing tailored advocacy training materials for OPDs to use with local government and school management.¹³

A meaningful partnership between NGOs and OPDs can be used effectively to focus pressure on local authorities for specific changes.



For example, in Bangladesh, NGOs partnered with OPDs to review national and local authority policy commitments, including national policy commitments under the Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act, 2013.

While the Act established implementation committees at a national and local level, partners uncovered poor representation of people with disabilities within the committees, which is counter to the Act. NGO and OPD partners also uncovered separate national policies that cite the need for representation and meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities. They used these findings to jointly advocate for sufficient representation of people with disabilities across all the coordination committees.

Project partners can also form dedicated groups with an advocacy mission. Inclusive Futures' inclusive education (pre-primary and primary) project partners in Tanzania established an Action Group in Inclusive Education with an advocacy focus. The Action Group included members from the Ministry of Education, as well as OPD partners, bridging local knowledge and responsibilities with national strategy. OPD partners included CHAVITA, NOSLI and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities.

The Action Group focused on advocacy for policy change and the rights of people with disabilities, specifically the implementation of inclusive education as part of mainstream schooling. Partners in the Action Group reviewed inclusive education policies and tools. They also undertook participatory field research to understand the lived experience of education for children with a wide range of disabilities, as well as parents and teachers.

Combining their diverse expertise and shared findings, the Action Group designed a new model for inclusive education.¹⁴ As a result, the Tanzanian government added the new inclusive education model to their National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2021-2026).

Thanks to the partnership, OPDs are now well-positioned to meaningfully support implementation of the agreed strategy and continue to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.¹⁵



Example 3: Using partnerships to remove physical barriers

The final example focuses on successful partnerships to improve access to public buildings. Local authorities hold responsibility for maintaining and developing public

buildings, including hospitals and schools. This includes ensuring they meet national standards for accessibility. As an Inclusive Futures NGO project partner in Nepal explains:

▶▶ The basic principle of an accessibility audit is a comprehensive technical and scientific assessment of the accessibility condition of an environment, associated facilities and any services to be delivered from it, taking into account all existing and prospective users.

If there are any national standards for accessibility in a place, the accessibility audit is carried out to check how far the build environment is in line with the standards and guidelines.

Furthermore, the audit gives concrete recommendations for the improvement of the environment following nationally or universally approved standards of accessibility and revision/ formulation of relevant legal provisions if necessary.¹⁶



In the Inclusive Futures inclusive eye health project in Nigeria, NGOs trained OPDs to lead local authorities through accessibility audits of public health facilities.¹⁷

With local authority health officials in attendance for the audits, OPDs drew on

their personal experiences to explain and demonstrate the importance of accessibility in public buildings. They used established audit criteria to measure and report the accessibility of the building. They then developed a set of recommendations for greater accessibility.

The partnership and the experience created consensus between local authorities and OPDs about priority areas for renovation.



The prioritised renovations were completed, thanks to the commitment of local authorities, with OPDs staying closing involved to ensure the renovations met the agreed accessibility standards.



Summary

The Inclusive Futures programme aims to build or strengthen partnerships for disability inclusion, including between local authorities, NGOs and OPDs. There are two actions that this report identifies as an important foundation for these partnerships:

1. Build shared understanding from the start

Assess knowledge, and include tailored disability inclusion training at the beginning of a partnership. This helps a project team to build a shared understanding and vision about disability inclusion.

2. Agree on roles and responsibilities of each partner

Establish clear roles and responsibilities, and keep partners involved and engaged throughout the project, such as through a steering committee.

There are three examples from project experience and case studies across the Inclusive Futures programme about at how partnerships between NGOs, local authorities and OPDs have positively influenced disability inclusion:

Example 1: Using partnerships to strengthen government tools and services for inclusion

Local authorities, NGOs and OPDs work in partnership to map, assess and strengthen existing government services to better include people with disabilities.

Example 2: Using partnership to advocate for inclusive policy implementation

Advocacy work is central to many OPD's missions, targeting both local and national authorities. Partners can support OPD advocacy work, including through capacity assessments, shared policy reviews, and relationship building.

Example 3: Using partnerships to remove physical barriers

Partners can work together to improve the physical accessibility of venues, where NGOs provide training and audit tools, OPDs deliver the audit, and local authorities attend and commit the required renovation to improve accessibility.



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For further information about Inclusive Futures, visit www.inclusivefutures.org

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- ¹ USAID summarises the localisation agenda as: “... focused on increasing local actors’ access to international humanitarian funding, partnerships, coordination spaces, and capacity building.” It also notes that: “Recently, there has also been increased attention to local leadership and influence in policy spaces.” USAID. [Localization: A “Landscape” Report](#). (December 2022).
 - ² World Health Organization. [Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities](#). (December 2022).
 - ³ [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). (2006).
 - ⁴ Inclusive Futures. [Top Ten Excuses Countdown](#). (2022).
 - ⁵ Information about OPD engagement in Inclusive Futures. Inclusive Futures. [A guide to building meaningful and successful partnerships between INGOs and OPDs](#) and [Creating meaningful and successful partnerships between INGOs and OPDs: key values and attitudes](#). (Both January 2023).
 - ⁶ International Disability Alliance. [Global Disability Summit \(GDS\) Discussion Paper, 2022: Promoting Engagement of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities \(OPDs\) in Development and Humanitarian Action](#). (2022). Page 9-10.
 - ⁷ United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. [Guidelines, Consulting Persons with Disabilities](#). (May 2021). Page 17.
 - ⁸ Reference to power imbalances. Inclusive Futures. [Consequences of Exclusion: A Situation Report on Organisations of People with Disabilities and COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe](#). (September 2021).
 - ⁹ United Nations Sustainable Development Group. [Universal Values Principle Two: Leave No One Behind](#).
 - ¹⁰ Information on the Disability Identity Card. Bangladesh National Parliament. [Bangladesh Persons with Disability Welfare Act 2001](#).
 - ¹¹ Information on Inclusive Futures’ sexual and reproductive health and rights projects. Inclusive Futures. [Sexual and Reproductive Health and Family Planning](#).
 - ¹² An example of an OPD capacity assessment tool. ADD International. [Three Circles Tool - organisational capacity assessment & planning tool](#). (April 2019).
 - ¹³ The wider OPD movement is also instrumental in assessing and strengthening the capacity of individual OPD members. See, for example, the International Disability Alliance. [Bridge CRPD-SDGs Training Initiative](#).
 - ¹⁴ Known as the Pre-primary and Primary Inclusive Education for Tanzania (PPPIET) model.
 - ¹⁵ More information on the PPPIET model. ADD International. [Pre-Primary and Primary Inclusive Education for Tanzania \(PPPIET\) – Foundation phase: Desk Review](#). (February 2020). [Pre-Primary and Primary Inclusive Education for Tanzania \(PPPIET\) – Foundation Phase : Report on Participatory Research to Inform Design of New Inclusive Education Model in Tanzania](#). (August 2020).
 - ¹⁶ National Federation of the Disabled Nepal, CBM and Kathmandu Metropolitan City. [Report on Accessibility Audit in Kathmandu, Nepal](#). (December 2018). Page 17.
 - ¹⁷ Sightsavers. [Accessibility Standards and Audit Pack for health facilities](#).

Inclusive Futures partners

ADD International | BBC Media Action | Benetech | BRAC | Central Organization of Trade Unions, Kenya | Development Initiatives Equal Rights Trust | Humanity & Inclusion | Inclusion International | Innovations for Poverty Action | The Institute of Development Studies | International Disability Alliance | Kenya Female Advisory Organization | Leonard Cheshire | Light for the World | LINC | Sense International | Sightsavers | Social Development Direct | Standard Chartered | Sustainable Hospitality Alliance | Ulula | United Disabled Persons of Kenya

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