

HOW CAN INCLUSION BE SUCCESSFULLY MAINSTREAMED IN GERMAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION?

Executive summary

The Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities launched by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) operationalises the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in German development policy.

The overarching goal of the Action Plan is to ensure the 'systematic mainstreaming of the inclusion of persons with disabilities'. An evaluation conducted by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) investigated whether the Action Plan has achieved this objective, what demands need to be met with regard to mainstreaming inclusion, and how German development cooperation can make a more systematic contribution towards realising the rights of persons with disabilities.

It emerged in the course of the evaluation that four components are important for mainstreaming inclusion:

1. Inclusion should be mainstreamed more systematically in procedures and structures of German development cooperation in order to make it more binding.
2. The concrete implementation of inclusive projects should deliver tangible benefits for persons with disabilities.
3. Institutional knowledge management is needed in order to systematically analyse the lessons learned in projects whose work contains best practices for inclusion.
4. The capacities and expertise for inclusion of specialised development cooperation staff should be developed.

One key question of the evaluation was how German development cooperation projects can be made more inclusive.

Three broad approaches emerged in relation to this question:

- Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations should be more closely involved in designing, implementing and evaluating projects.
- The availability of disaggregated data needs to be increased – particularly by developing appropriate capacities on the partner side.
- Human rights issues should be systematically addressed in dialogue with partners.

The development policy and international law context

Worldwide, persons with disabilities are afflicted by multidimensional poverty to an above-average extent. Furthermore, they often face discrimination and marginalisation. This makes realising their rights an important development policy issue. Moreover, in 2009 Germany ratified the CRPD. This Convention, which is binding under international law, also includes provisions on international cooperation. To implement these provisions the BMZ approved its 'Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities'. Since 2013 it has thus had a strategy in place designed to ensure the 'systematic mainstreaming of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in German development policy'. Beyond assessing the achievement of objectives, the findings and recommendations of the evaluation conducted between January 2016 and August 2017 should be used to design a follow-on strategy. Adopted in 2015, the 2030 Agenda – which refers to persons with disabilities in eight of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals – underlines the importance of such a follow-on strategy. The basic principle 'leave no one behind' gives greater weight to the human rights obligations of the States Parties towards persons with disabilities at the level of international policy.

Provisions of the CRPD regarding international cooperation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) already underlines the importance of international cooperation for realising the rights of persons with disabilities in its Preamble (letter l). It also includes provisions on the extra-territorial obligations of the States Parties in a dedicated article on international cooperation, which also affects development cooperation (Article 32). Pursuant to these provisions, development programmes implemented with German involvement must be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities. Moreover, the CRPD has been ratified by all partner countries mentioned in the Action Plan. With regard to realising the economic, cultural and social rights of persons with disabilities the States Parties are required to take measures to 'the maximum of [their] available resources'. These efforts should be supported by international cooperation 'where needed'. Since the support called for refers to implementation of the CRPD in its entirety, it is not just the specific provisions on international cooperation but ultimately all the articles that constitute important points of reference for German development cooperation.

How can the inclusion of persons with disabilities be successfully mainstreamed in the institutions of German development cooperation?

The evaluation showed that four components are key to mainstreaming inclusion: (1) mainstreaming inclusion in procedures and structures, (2) promoting specific projects in partner countries, (3) managing knowledge on lessons learnt in projects linked to inclusion, and (4) building capacity and expertise for inclusion. The Action Plan has prompted first measures in all four components, which clearly reflects its important role in providing the initial impetus and sending a signal.

Regarding the mainstreaming of inclusion in procedures and structures, the key aim must be to strengthen mechanisms to make inclusion binding, thus ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are upheld systematically in German development cooperation. This applies first of all to integrating inclusion into policy directives such as the BMZ's sector strategies. So far, persons with disabilities have been mentioned

in five of the nine sector strategies studied. The second important element is mechanisms to make inclusion mandatory in the design, planning and management of projects. The inclusion of persons with disabilities must be systematically integrated into the relevant processes and procedures. Here the evaluation clearly showed that in practice, this has so far taken place only to a very limited extent within the implementing organisations. For example, basic information on the life situation of persons with disabilities, which would be key to the inclusive design of projects, has so far been obtained neither systematically nor to an appropriate extent.

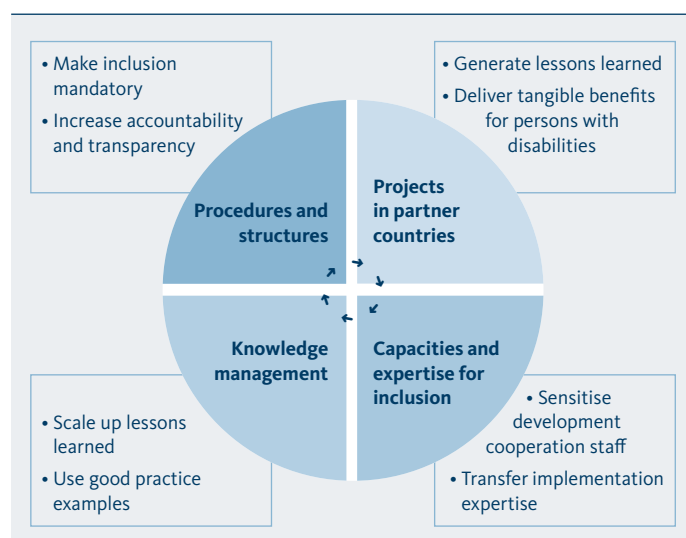
Due to these weak mechanisms for making inclusion mandatory, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in German development cooperation is strongly dependent on the engagement of 'individuals committed to inclusion'. This engagement is often based on personal and professional experience, rather than on systematic capacity development. Consequently, the systematic development of capacities and expertise for inclusion among specialised staff in German development cooperation is a further component of inclusion mainstreaming. This might lead to the rights of persons with disabilities being upheld more reliably and appropriately by the various groups of actors.

One key obstacle that hinders specialised staff from incorporating inclusion into their work is the presence of cross-cutting themes in the development cooperation system that are of equal importance. The fact that the inclusion of persons with disabilities has to compete with other themes – such as poverty reduction – creates pressure that may potentially adversely affect the attention paid to each individual theme. Consequently, to incorporate inclusion into the project design, planning and management processes it will be expedient to place the *inclusion of persons with disabilities* in a broader human rights context – for instance in conjunction with target-group analysis – rather than pursuing an inclusion agenda that makes inclusion a cross-cutting theme in its own right.

Institutional knowledge management forms a further component of successful inclusion mainstreaming. It requires the systematic analysis and scaling up of lessons learned in promising model projects that include elements of inclusion. This can generate institutional knowledge on implementing inclusion, and increase the number of inclusive projects. Here too a mechanism that would help make inclusion mandatory – a system to record inclusive projects – would be helpful (no such system yet exists). This would enable Germany to provide more specific information

on the percentage of inclusive projects within its overall portfolio, and more effectively meet its obligations to provide accountability regarding the implementation of Article 32 of the CRPD.

Interaction of the four components of inclusion mainstreaming



How do German development cooperation projects strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities?

The aim of mainstreaming inclusion in German development cooperation is to make projects in partner countries inclusive of, and accessible to, persons with disabilities. Lessons learned in projects can then be managed as institutional knowledge. Specific projects that involve inclusion are thus both the goal and the substrate for mainstreaming inclusion. The 'Action Plan for Inclusion' contains 14 such projects. In five case studies, the evaluation looked at the extent to which the projects concerned had contributed towards realising the rights of persons with disabilities. The evaluation team looked specifically at the extent to which representative organisations of persons with disabilities were involved in designing, planning and implementing projects, and the tangible benefits delivered for persons with disabilities with respect to specific articles of the CRPD (e.g. the right to education or social protection).

Here it emerged that in some specific projects German development cooperation is already delivering benefits for persons with disabilities. In Malawi, for instance, it is delivering government advisory services that are helping to secure basic social protection for persons with disabilities. In Indonesia too it

is advising on how to improve the access of persons with disabilities to social protection systems. In Bangladesh it is conducting vocational training measures. The development cooperation project in Togo is helping realise the rights of persons with disabilities by providing start-up training, and through the inclusive counselling delivered by the employment agencies.

Nonetheless there is considerable potential for improvement that should be fully harnessed in order to increase the benefits for persons with disabilities. This would include above all involving persons with disabilities and their representative organisations more closely in project design, implementation and evaluation. This could make projects more relevant from the perspective of persons with disabilities. One good example here is the case study in Togo. This vocational training project involved the umbrella organisation of Togolese representative organisations in its design and implementation.

To design, manage and evaluate projects that are effective, it is also hugely important to have access to disaggregated, high-quality data. Since these data are only available sporadically, it is usually not possible to draw any differentiated conclusions concerning the situation of persons with disabilities. As a result, disability-sensitive target-group analyses that would permit a realistic assessment of inclusion gaps and barriers are virtually impossible. Some projects respond to this shortcoming by conducting data-gathering activities of their own, and by supporting the development of corresponding partner capacities.

In the BMZ portfolio as a whole, so far only a small percentage of TC projects display elements of inclusion. The evaluation conducted a random sample of the projects commissioned in 2015, and established that this was the case for just approximately 6 per cent of project proposals. To increase this percentage, it would be absolutely essential to obtain considerably more funding in order to support the inclusive design of new projects, and make projects already commissioned more inclusive.

Dialogue with partners also provides important leverage for greater inclusion in German development cooperation projects. Given that the case studies identified gaps in implementation of the CRPD as one of the constraining factors for the operationalisation of inclusion, it is important to place the rights of persons with disabilities firmly on the agenda of government negotiations.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Action Plan has succeeded in taking the mainstreaming of inclusion in German development cooperation forwards. In the future, however, it will be crucial to transition from the somewhat opportunistic approach taken so far to a more systematic approach. Short-, medium- and long-term objectives should be defined both for harnessing existing potentials in sectors considered 'pro-inclusion', and to tackle existing inclusion deficits e.g. in the 'untouched sectors'. The allocation of sufficient financial resources will be a fundamental prerequisite for this, because only then can inclusion be successfully mainstreamed in German development cooperation. Moreover, responsibility for inclusion should also be mainstreamed at the BMZ beyond the lead division – e.g. through a dedicated task force for inclusion. This would facilitate effective management of the mainstreaming process.

To make inclusion more binding in the implementation of concrete projects, the evaluation team make the following recommendations:

- Human rights-based target-group analyses should be conducted, and followed up by the BMZ.
- A system to capture and record inclusive projects should be set up.
- As part of its dialogue with partners, the BMZ should address human rights issues – and therefore also the rights of persons with disabilities – more systematically in negotiations with partner governments.
- In the follow-on strategy for inclusion, the BMZ should attach special importance to opportunities for persons with disabilities and their representative organisations to participate. This might facilitate a more targeted approach to dealing with the rights and interests of persons with disabilities, which would increase the overall relevance of German development cooperation. However, the context in which participation by persons with disabilities and their representative organisations becomes absolutely essential is that of Germany's extraterritorial obligations arising from the CRPD. Eight years after ratification of the Convention, the demand articulated by the disability rights movement – 'Nothing about us without us!' – should also be axiomatic for German development cooperation.

Literature

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The German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) is mandated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to independently analyse and assess German development interventions. Evaluation reports contribute to the transparency of development results and provide policy-makers with evidence and lessons learned, based on which they can shape and improve their development policies.