

# Disability inclusion in evaluation

## Summary of the EvalForward discussion

SEPTEMBER 2023

Judith Kaitesi Katarbarwa started a discussion on EvalForward to encourage the sharing of experience and practice on disability inclusion in evaluation. Key points that emerged on each of the three questions proposed are summarized below. The full discussion is available at: <https://www.evalforward.org/discussions/disability-evaluation>.

### Questions

- 1. Do you think the concept of inclusive evaluation is always respected during the design and evaluation of projects and programmes?**
- 2. What hinders the full involvement of people with disabilities in project and programme evaluations? Please share your personal experience.**
- 3. How can evaluators mitigate the risks associated with a lack of inclusive evaluation, specifically for people living with disabilities in our communities?**



*Alex Kiheru, a young disabled farmer, and his wife harvest vegetables to sell them in the local market in Limuru, Kiambu County, Kenya. Alex is a member of an FAO-trained Achievers Youth Disabled Group.*

### Introduction on the concept of disability

*The term “people with disabilities” refers to those who have a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in conjunction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. There are multiple barriers: physical, institutional and attitudinal.*

*A person with a disability may be regarded as such in one society or setting, but not in another, depending on the role the person plays in his or her community. The perception and reality of disability also depend on the technologies, assistance and services available, as well as on cultural considerations.*

## 1. Do you think the concept of inclusive evaluation is always respected during the design and evaluation of projects and programmes?

With a few exceptions, most participants felt that evaluations tended not to be inclusive of people with disabilities for the following reasons:

- Projects and programmes themselves are not inclusive right from the preparation and inception stage.
- Evaluation terms of reference rarely include or attach importance to the need for inclusivity.
- There is limited understanding and awareness of the diversity of people’s disabilities.
- Evaluations have limitations on budget and time, regardless of the size of the project/programme.
- Development partners may not be keen to pay more or allow a longer time frame for inclusive evaluations of projects that are not specifically disability focused.
- The inclusion of people with disabilities is one issue among many others when it comes to implementation and evaluation.
- Big programmes working at scale may not have the space or means to accommodate the individual attention needed to focus on disability inclusion.

*“Even with the interest to work more on the topic, there isn’t much inclusion to actually evaluate! [...] there are so many topics that project teams are asked to look at, including caste, ethnicity, gender/sex, youth/age, poverty and remoteness, in addition to the actual project thematic topic itself (for example, agriculture, water supply, and so on).”*

Pamela White

*“Every place is different, but on the programme I’m involved in as Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, the active participation of the disabled and their inclusion is very important, because their opinions count a lot if we’re talking about an inclusive evaluation.”*

Fabandian Pekos Fofana

*“There are cases where five- and more-year projects, with large geographical coverage, are planned to be evaluated within, say, 10 days or so, with a lot of rush [...] In such cases, let alone to rightly include relevant people with disabilities (including their caretakers and/or responsible organizations), even adequate participatory discussions and decision-making with people without disabilities are compromised.”*

Hadera Gebru Hagos

## 2. What hinders the full involvement of people with disabilities in projects and programme evaluations? Please share your personal experience.

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The involvement of people with disabilities in the evaluation process may be difficult to achieve, and practical challenges can be exacerbated by social and cultural factors:

- Disability is diverse; it comes in so many forms and needs different approaches.
- It may not be possible in the time available to visit the homes of people with disabilities or for them to physically get to the meeting area.
- There may be a lack of or inadequate caretakers or representative organizations to give voice to people with disabilities, so as to fully involve them in evaluations.
- There may be a lack of or inadequate tools for ease of communication with evaluators.
- There may be a lack of or inadequate awareness among people with disabilities of their right to be involved in evaluations.
- In some instances, it may be a question of language and cultural norms: the language used to identify people with disabilities and other minorities may be considered offensive and hinder participation. This requires deeper reflection to understand the context in which we are conducting an evaluation.

When it comes to representing people with disabilities in evaluation teams, the challenge is to achieve representation of all sectors – that is, women and men, a spread of caste/ethnicity, as well as people with disabilities – along with the required thematic expertise and language skills. Also, an evaluator from a specific group will not necessarily be more sensitive to the issues of that group. Furthermore, access for evaluators or staff with disabilities can be problematic in rural areas.

*“An activity that suits a blind person may not suit someone with a mental disability [...] Often, people with physical disabilities – especially following an injury – don’t identify as being a person with a disability. I have also heard that there is even conflict within groups sometimes.”*

Pamela White

*“I think one of the barriers to disability inclusion and others, such as LGBTIQ, is the lack of an appropriate communication strategy. In most societies in Africa, for example, LGBTIQ people do not want to be called gay, lesbian, bisexual and so on, the same as a person with disability might not want to be termed disabled, for fear of being stigmatized.”*

Musa K. Sanoe

## 3. How can evaluators mitigate the risks associated with a lack of inclusive evaluation, specifically for people living with disabilities in our communities?

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Suggestions provided by participants to promote inclusion in evaluation:

- Online methods can help us to reach people in remote areas if they have access to a smartphone or laptop and expertise or assistance. This works for both individual meetings or small groups with their own connection, but not for focus groups in a community setting.
- Invite everyone to participate in meetings and enquire as to who is not participating and who in the community may have a disability.

- Ensure that if the disaggregation of data has been extended to those with a disability, we report on it. If it has not, then ensure it is a recommendation for the project team.
- Encourage the project to provide sensitization/training for staff on issues of disability (simple exercises, such as getting them to use crutches or a wheelchair, are a great way for them to relate to the issues involved rather than merely understand them in theory).
- Improve project staff understanding of the importance of including people living with disabilities in evaluations.
- Be committed to being a voice for the voiceless/people with disabilities.
- Sustain advocacy for and create design guidelines on the inclusion of people living with disabilities in evaluations.
- Use technology and encourage interested people to propose the most suitable technological solution or gadget.

## Resources

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### **Modules on Disability Inclusion in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

Developed by MONEV Studio and the Washington Group for the United Nations M&E Staff/Focal Point in Indonesia

<https://indonesia.un.org/en/234468-training-modules-capacity-building-disability-inclusion-united-nations-monitoring-and>

### **Disability inclusive practices in evaluation: Where are we and what can we learn?**

Webinar organized by the World Food Programme in the context of EvalXchange 2023

<https://sway.office.com/QbYmTvcEniT408s?ref=Link>

### **Leaving no one behind: Meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in evaluations**

<https://www.evalforward.org/blog/persons-disabilities>