LEARNING ROUTE
Enabling Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation

CASE STUDY
Disability Inclusion Facilitator (DIF) model and Disability Inclusion Academy
Empowering persons with disabilities to become active actors of change
Learning Route Enabling Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation: The experience of Uganda

Within the framework of the Sparking Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation (SPARK) Project implemented by Light for the World with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Procasur, a training and capacity building activity called Learning Route “Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation: the experience of Uganda” has been organized in June 2022. SPARK makes part of the commitment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to integrate a continuous and systematic approach to mainstreaming disability inclusion in its programs and projects.

The main objective of this Learning Route is to study the best practices from Uganda that are strengthening disability inclusion in the rural milieu and to facilitate their adaptation and adoption within the four SPARK countries. Through this learning journey participants will strengthen capacities to identify, analyze and scaling up best practices, tools and models that empower persons with disabilities as advocates, increase their access to appropriate financial and non-financial services, develop suitable technologies and make value chains more inclusive.

The Learning Routes organized by PROCASUR follow a proven methodology for peer-to-peer learning, which serves the scaling up of locally harvest innovations that improve the living conditions of vulnerable populations in rural areas.

We thank each person and organization that opened their doors for us to conduct this study. We trust that these good practices and the stories behind them will be of help to many more women and men.

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The PROCASUR corporation is a global organization specialized in harvesting and scaling local innovations. The organization’s mission is to foster the exchange of local knowledge to end rural poverty. By sharing innovations through various tools and methodologies for local knowledge management, the organization connects global institutions with local talent, and provides structured learning platforms needed to disseminate and scale up innovation. PROCASUR has facilitated learning opportunities in more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, influencing the lives and livelihoods of thousands of local talents around the world.
The DIF model was first created in Uganda by Light for the World within the Livelihood Improvement Challenge Project, initiated in Uganda by the National Lottery Community Fund, based in UK, and aiming to add to existing body of knowledge and practices on how to best improve the livelihoods of young persons with disabilities through mainstream programs and interventions. The Challenge looked to better understand the barriers that limit young people’s participation by learning directly from persons with disabilities and strategic partners.

Using traditional methods for information collection (Focus group discussions, interviews, and desk studies) and others more innovative like radio polls and organizing a Learning Expedition, it was revealed that some livelihood programs in the country have not a deliberate target when it comes to include young persons with disabilities and wouldn’t know how to. It also came out that there is a lack of access to information on existing opportunities and structures to support persons with disabilities, as well as self-exclusion and dependency to their families.
Soon these DIFs team were not enough for the increasing demand under the Make 12.4% Work Initiative, and the Disability Inclusion Academy was ideated to train larger groups of persons with disabilities and become young agents of change in advocating for inclusion. The first Disability Inclusion Academy and its learning curriculum was tested in Northern Uganda in 2018.

After this problem analysis a 4-day pressure cooker session using the Social Innovation Lab methodology, young persons with disabilities guided by a creative designer and a process facilitator came out with various ideas, one of them being the Make 12.4% Work Initiative, implemented in partnership by Light for the World, the National Union of Disabled Persons Uganda, and Reach a Hand Uganda.

The rationale behind was to work on the challenge of missing economic and livelihood development opportunities by “creating demand among employers and development organizations to become more disability inclusive”. Additionally, following the principle of “nothing about us, without us”, the learning process had to be led by persons with disabilities themselves. Under that context, a first group of six Disability Inclusion Facilitators was established ensuring gender, age, and disability balance. Light for the World first prototyped this innovative approach within the Make 12.4% Work program in 2018, supported by the funds from the UK’s National Lottery Community Fund.

“Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs) are young people with disabilities who raise awareness on inclusion, support mainstream organizations, companies and MDAs in becoming more inclusive, and match job seekers with disabilities to employment and livelihood opportunities. They are a local resource able to provide effective and locally relevant support to young people with disabilities, employers, and other livelihood actors on the ‘how’ of disability inclusion.”

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In 2018, the Make 12.4% Work Initiative was founded. The 12.4% refers to the percentage of the population in Uganda that has a disability. This initiative aimed at triggering the private sector and civil society actors to open employment opportunities and programs to persons with disabilities. The expected output for this two-year project was to bring together 124 companies and organizations in a directory, it started with 12 business and mainstream organizations who acted as role models (also called Ambassadors) when it comes to enticing others to opening their doors to persons with disabilities, promoting their abilities and skills. These ambassadors for disability inclusion had a common background of having a good starting point on disability inclusiveness and represented a range of sectors, including the financial, beverage, utilities, retail, hospitality and public sector, and NGOs (national and international).

A strong branding which included logo, brochure, campaign materials and website showing the ambassadors and the DIFs were also prepared before the launching of the campaign. Through the Facebook page set up by the initiative, the numerous vacancies shared by companies were shared.

An issue raised quickly: because of various reasons the work inexperience of persons with disabilities and the unawareness of employers on the abilities of persons with different disabilities, employments were not being concretized.

To overcome this new challenges, two solutions were put in place, first to start a WhatsApp group to share opportunities to job seekers with a disability in sign language and voice. The second to install a 3-month internship program. There was a double benefit to it: persons with disabilities gaining work experience and possible permanent employment, and employers being exposed and build capacities to habilitate an inclusive work environment.
In Uganda, there are at least 2.6 million youth with disabilities, only about 15% are employed, this is one of the issues the Make 12.4% Work Initiative seeks to contribute to by opening employment and business opportunities of people with disabilities, by advising businesses on inclusivity and approaching youth with disabilities to work environment, acquiring skills, and creating networks.

Persons with disabilities being on the lead of this initiative they play a key role in building relationships with employers and organizations, raising awareness on disability inclusion, training and coaching, job seekers matching, monitoring and support of disability inclusion. With time DIFs and as they build the relationship with counterparts, they start growing a portfolio of mainstream organizations and companies who joined the Make 12.4% Work.

To ensure the sustainability of the initiative, one step further was taken: influencing positive change within the policy environment and government programs. Two task forces were installed, Inclusive Employment and Inclusive Livelihood Programming and both have come up with proposals at convenient times for installing good practices on inclusion of persons with disabilities at government level. The Referral app has also been created to refer persons with disabilities to Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)and their branches all over Uganda, as well as service providers of interest and disability specific organizations.
Learning objectives

Understanding the Disability Inclusion Facilitator role and profile.

Characterize the journey of a DIF through the Disability Inclusion Academy and the different engagement steps.

Analyze the experience of the DIFs as service providers into mainstreaming programs and as role models for disabled communities.

Identifying the results and impacts of the model on the lives of DIFs, their communities and the ecosystem.
Development of the experience

The DIF has become one of the main models used by Light for the World to promote disability inclusion. Through the years it has been perfected to become a scalable model. For instance, the roles of a DIF in general terms have been clearly defined:

- Builds relationships with mainstream actors: across government, civil society and private sector actors.
- Raises awareness on disability inclusion through training sessions.
- Focuses on the “how-to” of disability inclusion: offering practical solutions from an informed point of view.
- Grows a network of people with disabilities and matches them to existing livelihood and job opportunities.
- Monitors and supports disability inclusion in practice.
- Acts as a role-model: inspiring mainstream actors to take on disability inclusion. Motivates other youth disabilities to actively seek out opportunities to better their lives.

Still, one of the distinctive qualities of the DIF model is that it can be adapted to the needs or thematic interest of a specific project, organizations, or company.

Call for application

Starting with a specific demand coming from a program, a group of new DIF can be trained and coached. The journey for a person with disabilities to become a DIF starts with the Application where potential DIFs finds out (radio, flyers, newspapers, or other mobilization campaign tools using traditional communication channels or social media platforms and disability networks such as OPDs) of the Disability Inclusion Academy and if interested, applies. The mobilization campaign is carried with the support and in close collaboration with national/regional organizations of persons with disabilities and other existing structures of interest.

The profile of a DIF in terms of educational background and experience in disability inclusion are not overly demanding (minimum education is required and membership in an OPD is desirable but not a conditions), but a strong focus is put on soft skills such as pro-activity, confidence and leadership skills, vision, respect, listening, teamwork, and problem solving.
Disability Inclusion Academy

Once the dates to apply are over, a shortlist is made filtering candidates who did not fit the minimum requirement on education, and/or in consideration of any other specific targets of the program (age range, gender quota, diversity of types of disabilities occupation, etc) in question. After this revision, a first round of 30 to 50 potential DIFs is invited to participate in the Disability Inclusion Academy. For two days, selected candidates are taught the basics on disability and the main roles of a DIF, they are also given a short assignment during an individual in depth interview. At the end of the 2-day selection process, 10 to 20 participants are chosen to continue with the Disability Inclusion Academy. This process has been adapted based on individual programs and is sometimes carried out as a 1 day interview process.

Next, the potential DIF are engaged in a 5-6 day Training of Trainers (ToT) that covers the rest of the contents envisaged in the DIF Curriculum. This curriculum is co-designed by LFTW, partners and relevant stakeholders and contains standard learnings on disability inclusion, while other included thematic will depend on the particular program where these DIF will be inserted in. The process of designing the curriculum also considers the definition of the specific roles of the DIF within the program, the development of a Competency Based Framework to guide the assessment and certification process and identify and clarify the roles of facilitators and resource persons in the ToT and fellowship process.
# DIF CURRICULUM

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<td>Introduction to the DIF Model&lt;br&gt;Explanation of the roles, training process, steps of engagements and logistics.</td>
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Legal Framework around Disability Inclusion&lt;br&gt;Presentation of key international and national laws and policies on disability inclusion and how to use them in their engagements with various stakeholders.</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Basic Concepts: Disability and Inclusion&lt;br&gt;Key elements are introduced such as the rights-based model and the different types of impairments.</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Understanding Barriers, and the Cornerstones of Inclusion&lt;br&gt;Focus on the ACAP and how to turn it into cornerstones of inclusion.</td>
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<td>Showing respect and dignity&lt;br&gt;On the impact of negative terminology and alternative respectful term to use.</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Creating barrier-free access&lt;br&gt;Centered on the concept of accessibility and reasonable accommodation, as well as the accessibility audit tool.</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Inclusion of different types of impairments&lt;br&gt;Detailing the different types of impairment.</td>
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<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>Thematic content&lt;br&gt;Depends on the needs of a program who will be engaging with DIFs.</td>
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<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td>Benchmarking inclusion&lt;br&gt;On the levels of change where DIFs can play a role in generating change, and on the usage of key tools to benchmark with a company, institution or organization.</td>
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<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td>Safeguarding&lt;br&gt;Learning the concept of power and how DIF must react in case of abuse of power.</td>
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<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td>Preparing for a Disability Awareness Training&lt;br&gt;Planning training session for different target audiences, depending on their needs.</td>
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<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td>Refresher trainings&lt;br&gt;In depth training on specific thematic topics.</td>
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On the job learning and certification

During 6 to 9 months the DIF trainees are contracted to perform in the job with accompaniment and mentorship from an assigned mentor (a more experienced DIFs and/or Disability Inclusion Advisors). The assessment of the trainees is made 2 to 3 times for each type of role or competency they are expected to perform on. If the scores awarded surpass the cut-off point (75%) and members (partners and disability structures involved) agree on these results, the DIF will receive his or her certification. Following this recognition, DIFs are given a smart phone and are paid professional fee for the activities they conduct (30 USD approximately) as service provider, offering technical support to a range of actors on disability inclusion.

What are Disability Inclusion Officer/Advisors and how do they play a different role to DIFs?

**DISABILITY INCLUSION OFFICER**

This is a project officer staff position awarded to DIFs that excel in their roles and as opportunities arise within the programs run by Light for the World and its partners. In this role, they pick on field-level program management and implementation in addition to providing technical support on inclusion.

**DISABILITY INCLUSION ADVISORS**

This is a programs officer/technical support staff position awarded to DIFs that excel in their roles and as opportunities arise within the programs run by Light for the World and its partners. In this role, they pick on high-level technical support on disability inclusion, and program management as well as coordinating the activities and training of DIFs.
Follow up of the DIFs communities

DIFs meet on monthly basis with Disability Inclusion Officer/Advisors to share updates on activities carried and achievements in the field and receive mentorship. Refresher trainings are also undertaken where arising topics can also be added here. Two annual national meetings are useful for planification and team building. They also exchange on more regular basis through WhatsApp group and email (report sending).

Depending on the project structures they may also report at regional or national level.

They can opt for a variety of end pathways, such as: becoming a mentor, continue with providing services, seek for promotion to Disability Inclusion Officer/Advisor, and work with OPDs, as community leaders, or in NGOs.
STEPS OF ENGAGEMENT IN MAINSTREAMING DISABILITY INCLUSION INTO AN ORGANIZATION

1. Understanding the organization
DIFs do a previous investigation on the actor they will start the engagement with, they get to know the organization prior their first visit.

2. Create urgency
First discussions are established with the organization, the DIF introduce themselves, what they do and how they can support disability inclusion within the company or organization.

3. Generate management commitment
LFTW and the organization or company (managers or director) sign a Proof of commitment, where the conditions of the DIF as service provider are cleared out as well as the responsibilities of the partner (activities, responsible person, budget, etc.).

4. Disability awareness training
DIFs facilitate a 1 or 2-day training to expand the knowledge of the partner on the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Some of the contents are social approach to disability, ACAP, types of impairments and how to ensure their reasonable accommodation.
Benchmark inclusion exercise

A milestone in the steps of engagement is the benchmark inclusion exercise. This will set the bases to elaborate an action plan for the company or organization. There are three different tools that can be used depending on the context, or actor. They are applied by the DIFs and responded by partners and relevant stakeholders, or by beneficiaries. These are: the Disability Inclusion Scoring Cards (DISC) and the accessibility audit.

**DISC**

This tool provide insight on the current situation of an organization regarding the inclusion of persons with different disabilities. The checklist is structured around 5 domains: governance, program management practices, human resources, financial resources, and accessibility. The DISC is applied three times: as a baseline, during midterm review and towards the end of a mainstreaming process.

**Accessibility audit**

A detailed look at the building of a workplace, organization, or institution to assess the physical barriers for the different type of impairments and their needs. The audit team play a key role with their expertise on how to reasonable accommodation can be ensured at minimum cost.
Monitoring visits
The findings of the benchmark inclusion exercise are reported by DIFs and guide the action planning for inclusion by the organization or company. Following visits by DIFs will support the actor with their doubts and follow up on the execution of the agreed action points.

Documentation
The DIFs document success stories that can add up to the each individual DIFs portfolio.
### Lessons learned, results, and impacts

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<th>Lessonslearned</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Impacts</th>
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<td><strong>Today, there are 44 certified Disability Inclusion Facilitators spread across Uganda.</strong></td>
<td>After the first DIFs prototyping in the Central region and the first Disability Inclusion Academy testing in the Northern region showed to be a successful innovative concept with great potential, the process was upscaled and added to subsequent programs run by Light for the World.</td>
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<td><strong>DIFs are helping mainstream programs to become inclusive and act as role models for other youth with disabilities.</strong></td>
<td>Beyond Uganda, the DIF model has been since replicated and adapted in <strong>South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Burkina Faso</strong> as well as in Bangladesh, and Nepal.</td>
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<td><strong>The Disability Inclusion Academy has showed to be an effective mechanism to build the capacities and empower persons with disabilities.</strong></td>
<td>They become active members in awareness raising and advocacy, mobilize persons with disabilities to existing livelihoods opportunities, sensitize, assist, and guide different organizations, companies, and Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to take concrete steps towards disability inclusion. They grow their confidence level and boost the ambition of some about career development. To be supported by a mentor (senior DIF and Advisors) during the fellowship and after who provides guidance on how managing tasks, organization and projects is also a good practice.</td>
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A milestone of the collaboration between the DIF and partners are the tools like the DISC and audits that promote self-reflection and lead to a diagnosis of the currently practiced inclusive actions and areas in need of improvement. The action plan that comes out from the assessment and audits provide clear guidelines, next steps, and timeline for the agreed action points to be implemented by the institution, company, or organization. These also serve as a basis for the DIF to monitor the implementation progress of the action points, called “supportive visits”.

Although many times at the start of an engagement process companies, institutions or organizations may be afraid of the cost of incorporate disability inclusive measures.

The DIFs have helped to diminish this impression by sharing very cost-efficient ways of doing it.

Networking has increased access to employment opportunities of DIFs inside other organizations.

The exposure to development stakeholders (government, OPDs, NGOs and companies) allows the ask DIFs to deploy in different environments and to be recognized as a strategic actor for stakeholders compromised in the inclusion of people with disabilities.
When working at community level, DIFs are perceived as role models, empowering others to overcome stigma, promoting acceptance and hindering barriers coming from the environment, low self-esteem, and self-exclusion. They can empower other persons with disabilities on their rights, provide training on disability awareness and mentorship on how to deal with the barriers.

When working at community level, DIFs are perceived as role models, empowering others to overcome stigma, promoting acceptance and hindering barriers coming from the environment, low self-esteem, and self-exclusion. They can empower other persons with disabilities on their rights, provide training on disability awareness and mentorship on how to deal with the barriers.

They support the work done by OPDs at territorial level in mobilization for programs, so they get that target when persons with disabilities are not showing up (often left behind and are excluded of the access to information). Their territorial anchoring and strong connection to local support structures for persons with disabilities convert them in a strategic actor to support these processes. DIFs can also ally with local OPDs for the collection of evidence, elaboration of reports, access to TICs, etc. DIFs have capacities to systematic collection of data that allow documenting change. Through applying assessments and reporting them are one of the skills set.

Due to their preparation in disability inclusion awareness creation, DIFs are called to participate in events organized by local governments, institutions or companies and facilitate sensitization activities. Again, expanding their networks has positioned themselves as a knowledgeable and resourceful person on disability inclusion to engage in decision making spaces. They can also strengthen local government works to reach the persons with disabilities by communicating and disseminating the available livelihood program opportunities to persons with disabilities.
DIFs receive regular refresher trainings, such as TICs and disability inclusive programming.

Whenever a new development project comes in and require DIF services, a special induction training is undergone, so DIFs are well informed on the main thematic areas of the program (examples: value chain, inclusive savings, gender) and on the roles are they expected to play (coaching and mentorship, awareness trainings, etc.).

Working with persons with disabilities implies to have always in consideration to ensure a barrier-free access.

A very important step towards fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities to participate fully in all areas of community and work. Such as the reasonable accommodation and medical insurance.

Becoming a DIF has given an opportunity frequently denied to persons with disabilities: making profitable earnings, acquire senior positions, and create a professional pathway.

Fixing professional fees, monthly reporting, and continuous learning has helped DIFs to perceive themselves as professionals, not volunteers.
EVIDENCE OF IMPACTS AND RESULTS

- 156 private sector and institutions (Ambassadors) reached to open doors for youths with disabilities gain meaningful employment, skills and mentorship.
- More than 5,000 persons have undergone the Disability Awareness Training.
- 59 assessments (DISC, accessibility audit, barrier analysis).
- 76 youth with disabilities who were engaged in a work experience placement within the Make 12.4% Work Initiative.
- 142 organizations who have received the Awareness training.
- 7,087 persons with disabilities who have been included in mainstreaming programs.
- About 156 organizations, institutions, and companies with which DIF have built relationships with.
- 59 assessments (DISC, accessibility audit, barrier analysis).
- 6 Disability Inclusion Academies have been conducted.
- 44 Persons with disabilities who received their certification as DIF.
- 96 Persons with disabilities who have gone through the training at the Disability Inclusion Academy.
- 142 organizations who have received the Awareness training.
- The DIF model has been scaled up in South Sudan, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Nepal.
- Certified DIFs:
  - South Sudan (07)
  - Bangladesh (10)
  - Tanzania (04)
  - Mozambique (09)
Bibliography

- https://www.light-for-the-world.org/our-work/project-countries/uganda/
Inclusive Rural Transformation

www.sparkinclusion.org

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