

LINKS – Catalysing Economic Growth for Northern Nigeria

Disability inclusion: emerging lessons and future direction for LINKS Nigeria

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1. Introduction

Funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the 7-year LINKS Nigeria programme seeks to support the development of a vibrant economy in the three key northern Nigerian states of Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa, so they collectively act as a powerful engine of northern economic growth. LINKS seeks to raise the income of 3 million people and support the creation of 100,000 full-time equivalent jobs, and contribute to a 15% rise in potentially taxable private sector revenues which could then be invested in public service and infrastructure.

The former DFID's 2017 [Economic Development Strategy](#) places a strong emphasis on “inclusive growth” and commits to providing the poorest and most marginalised people with access to productive employment. Similarly, the [Disability Inclusion Strategy \(2018-2023\)](#) outlines its pledge to leaving no one behind and ensuring that all people with disabilities are engaged, empowered and able to exercise and enjoy their rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others. These commitments are reflected in LINKS' ambitious 40% target for women's economic participation and its goal to create 6,000 jobs for people living with disabilities across northern Nigeria.

LINKS aspirations are in line with the emerging legislative framework by Federal and State governments to enable the economic participation of people with disabilities in Nigeria. Responding to “relentless advocacy” (Holden, Clark and Abualghaib 2019) by Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and disability activists, the Federal Government of Nigeria and about 15 State governments, including Jigawa and Kano¹, have enacted disability right laws and policies with provisions to support employment and economic participation of people with disabilities over the last decade. The Nigeria Disability Act of 2018, which was signed into law in January 2019, is the first step towards Nigeria operationalising the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD), which Nigeria had ratified in 2007. The Act provides that the public sector employs at least 5% of people with disabilities while also making appropriate reasonable accommodations. The law also prohibits the public and private sector from discriminating against people with disabilities who seek employment from their organisations, and requires all employers to make reasonable accommodation for disabled employees. It also stipulates a five-year transitional period for modifying public buildings, structures, and automobiles to make them accessible and usable for people with disabilities ([Ewang 2019](#)). While the Disability Legislation provides a welcome entry point for DPOs and development organisations, concerns about real political will to implement the legislation remain within a context of widespread discrimination, prejudice and social exclusion of people living with disabilities—despite the inauguration of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities in January 2021.

In order to translate programme aspirations into results LINKS has developed a Vision on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion that puts disability front and centre and is based on four key principles:

1. Moving away from a charity/welfare model where people with disabilities are seen as dependent with few skills to the facilitation of innovation and investment that creates **benefits for both the private sector and people with disabilities**;
2. **Mainstreaming disability inclusion** into all LINKS interventions by working with DPOs and understanding and addressing the multiple barriers that prevent people with disabilities from active participation in the labour market;
3. Supporting **targeted interventions** to specifically focus on barriers people with disabilities face; and
4. **Filling evidence and data gaps** through routine collection and analysis of disaggregated data with regards to people with disability.

Over its first year of implementation, LINKS has undertaken an internal staff survey on disability inclusion, actively taken part in a disability inclusion training session and integrated the [Washington Group of Disability Statistics Short Set of Functioning questions](#) into its baseline assessments. Moreover, LINKS has commissioned a Disability Sector Scan with the objective to understand the DPO landscape in its target states of Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa, gain different perspectives on the barriers people with disabilities are confronted with and identify initiatives that have the potential to create jobs and income at scale.

This report summarises the key insights from the Sector Scan, highlights the lessons LINKS has learnt when filling evidence gaps, includes the findings of a literature review (including information from the [Disability Inclusion Helpdesk](#)) and reflects what other programmes in northern Nigeria, such as [Propcom Mai-karfi](#), [Mafita](#) or [Inclusive Futures](#), have learnt and generously shared.

¹ Kaduna state does not currently implement any disability rights legal framework but a draft is being discussed.

2. Disability and data in Nigeria

Disability prevalence in Nigeria

There is no accurate census of the disability population in Nigeria and conflicting prevalence rates are provided across different sources, a result of differing definitions of disability, differing methodologies used, and variations in data quality ([WHO 2011](#); Holden, Clark and Abualghaib 2019).

The 2006 Census, the 2012 Nigerian General Household Survey and the [2018 National Demographic and Health Survey \(DHS\)](#) all report a disability prevalence rate of approximately 2%. However, many experts suggest this is an underestimation of the actual population of persons with disabilities ([WHO 2011](#); [Haruna 2017](#)): the 2006 Census relied on self-reporting of disability status, which typically will underestimate prevalence², while the 2012 Household Survey and the 2018 DHS only used an adapted version of the Washington Questions which similarly raises concerns of underreporting. Despite this, it is interesting to note that the DHS finds that 9% of people over the age of 60 live with a disability and while Kaduna is more or less in line with national average, Kano and Jigawa have higher than average prevalence rates with 5% of men in Jigawa reporting a lot of difficulty or cannot function in at least one domain.

The World Health Organization ([WHO 2011](#)) estimates that there are approximately 25 million persons with disabilities in Nigeria. This corresponds to 13.2% of the population, which would be closer to the global estimates that typically 15% of the population live with disabilities. It is furthermore estimated that nearly 40% of people with disabilities in Nigeria have multiple impairments ([Thompson 2020](#)).

Disability, poverty and economic participation

Approximately, 9 out of 10 people with disabilities in Nigeria live below the poverty line ([NIALS 2010](#), [Haruna 2017](#)). Disability can both be cause and consequence of poverty: disability can reduce access to education, employment, opportunities and resources therefore increasing the risk of poverty. Similarly, people in poverty can develop disabilities due to inadequate nutrition, unclean environments, disease, inefficient health services and poor infrastructure. Untreated and chronic diseases affect increasing numbers of people in developing countries, resulting in physical and functional disability ([Smith 2011](#)). Poverty and disability often reinforce each other, creating a cycle ([Inclusive Futures 2020](#)). The [WHO \(2011\)](#) estimates that more women have a disability globally than men (19.2% of women compared to 12% of men), due to a combination of exclusion from education and healthcare, poor nutrition and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG).

Available research strongly suggests that persons with disabilities are underrepresented in the Nigerian labour market with women with disabilities frequently experiencing the combined disadvantages associated with gender as well as disability. [Leonard Cheshire \(2018\)](#) estimate the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities (15-24 years) to be 77% – compared to 49% amongst persons without disabilities. Moreover, those who are in work face further obstacles to progression. Only 0.9% of managerial positions are filled by people with disabilities – of these 100% were men ([Leonard Cheshire, 2018](#)). Persons with disabilities also have lower access to financial services, a main obstacle to entrepreneurship: only 12% of persons with disabilities are estimated to have a bank account compared to 16% for persons without a disability. And while 19% of men with disabilities have access to banking the proportion for women with disabilities having a bank account stands at a mere 4%.³

A recent labour market study by Inclusion Works ([Inclusive Futures 2019](#)) notes that available data on people with disabilities and the economy in Nigeria lacks credibility, is often contradictory and does “not provide insight into the proportion of persons with disability in various economic activities in the economy despite the fact that persons with disabilities are also actively involved in many sectors of the economy”. Individual pieces of research try to fill this data gap, such as a recent study in Yobe, Jigawa, Adamawa, Bauchi and Kaduna states (Propcom Maikarfi 2019) which shows that persons with disability are actively involved across agriculture, in particular in crop farming and livestock rearing (both dominated by men). DPOs in the LINKS Sector Scan report many people with disabilities are in agro-processing. Among people with disabilities, men with disabilities were found to be involved in maize, rice, groundnut and soya bean while women with disabilities were found to dominate local poultry farming, cattle rearing and dairy (Propcom Maikarfi 2019).

² For example, older persons may not consider themselves as having a disability, despite having significant difficulties in functioning, because they consider their level of functioning appropriate for their age. (WHO, 2011, pp 24) Moreover, people may be reluctant to report their disability within an environment of stigma and discrimination.

³ This data is derived from the 2012 General Household Survey which, as outlined earlier, suffers methodological problems likely resulting in underreporting of disability.

3. Barriers to economic participation

LINKS takes a rights approach to disability, defining persons with disabilities as:

“[...] those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” ([United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), CRPD)

This concept of disability moves away from the traditional individual, medical-based perspective characterised by a focus on physical deficits (impairments), to one that encompasses the attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers that limit or exclude people with impairments from participation in society and the economy.

Education and skills training: Barriers to participation in education and training place people with disabilities at a disadvantage in the job market (evidence quoted in [GSDRC 2015](#)) and can hold them back as entrepreneurs. The access to education gap between people with and without disabilities in Nigeria is significant and increases at each level of education. [Leonard Cheshire \(2018\)](#) reports that the literacy rate across Nigeria is 36% for people with disabilities compared to 64% for people without disabilities. The rate is lowest for women/girls with disabilities at only 21% across Nigeria. Given literacy rates for women in North West Nigeria are considerably lower (29%) than the national average (53%) ([DHS 2018](#)) we conclude that few disabled women are literate in the LINKS states. A recent survey in northern Nigeria (Propcom Maikarfi 2019) showed that 37% of disabled survey respondents had Islamic education and 10% no formal education (with women having no formal education at double the rate than men). The most prevalent barriers to acquiring an education are reportedly household poverty, inaccessibility with respect to physical structures, appropriate information formats, in-class communication support, assistive technology, and discrimination ([Inclusive Futures 2019](#)). Mafita, a skills-to-employment programme in northern Nigeria, learnt that transport costs were a major barrier for youths with disabilities to attend skills training programmes. The LINKS Sector Scan found that resulting capacity gaps do not only relate to technical skills of the trade but include essential knowledge on laws and regulations and poor financial literacy and business management skills—all of which impedes enterprise formalisation and growth.

Institutional barriers include many laws, policies, strategies or practices that discriminate against people with disabilities. Discrimination may not be intended but systems can indirectly exclude people with disabilities by not taking their needs into account. Substantial paperwork required by financial institutions has been identified in addition to the lack of ramps and narrow doorways in Nigerian banks, as a driver for people with disabilities having lower access to financial services ([Elekwe and Ebenso, 2016](#)). Lack of access to capital was identified as the number one barrier for disabled entrepreneurs by the LINKS Sector Scan. It also found that disabled entrepreneurs are rarely registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission, are largely unaware or cannot afford the costs associated with regulatory standards such as product registration with the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and do not benefit from government procurement opportunities. Recent data from northern Nigeria (Propcom Maikarfi 2019) showed that over 90% of people living with disabilities are not part of any agricultural cooperative, which affects their access to networks, information and opportunities, such as benefiting from lower prices through buying in bulk.

Environmental barriers: Inaccessible environments reinforce disability by creating barriers to participation and inclusion. This includes but is not limited to physical access (such as lack of ramps, narrow doorsteps, lack of accessible toilets, or inaccessible transport), inaccessible communication and information and lack of affordable support services for people with disabilities ([Thompson 2020](#)). This was echoed by DPOs interviewed for the LINKS Sector Scan: in Kaduna State, the Association of the Blind stated that *“Our main challenge is how to get our goods to the market. We lack support to do this independently and this increases our cost of doing business.”*

“Many of us are compelled to do our businesses from home due to lack of accessible roads and public transport to the markets. When we sell from home, sales are very limited and we don’t make profit.”

Key informant, Spinal Cord Group, Jigawa

Attitudinal barriers result in stigmatisation and discrimination and deny people with disabilities their dignity and potential. Commonly expressed by an inability to see past the impairment, attitudinal barriers mean persons with disability are commonly misrepresented as people to be pitied rather than as people who can contribute to the development of Nigeria. Society widely views disability as a charity issue which is to some extent also reflected in the way DPOs work, often taking a welfare approach to the support of their members in the absence of any productive opportunities ([Thompson 2020](#)). The LINKS Sector Scan has identified attitudinal barriers as the most significant

barrier to the employment of people with disabilities. Almost 1 in 3 people with disabilities reported that they received negative feedback or were given inadequate attention after disclosing their impairments to potential employers ([Inclusive Futures 2019](#)). Attitudinal barriers also affect entrepreneurs with stigma posing a major obstacle for people with disabilities to access markets. The belief, in particular in rural areas, that rituals involving women with cognitive disabilities, including perpetration of sexual violence, bring wealth or prolong life means women with disabilities often cannot safely engage in markets and trade. ([Jerry et al 2015](#)) Stigma relating to people with disabilities can result in social isolation, which in turn can lead to a 'lack of pro-active behaviour in expressing their opinions and claiming their rights', leading to further exclusion (various, quoted in [GSDRC 2015](#), p. 34). Referred to as **internalised oppression**, this can severely affect the participation and functioning of people with disabilities in society. Low expectations and a lack of self-confidence, fuelled by the common perception of people with disabilities as beggars, can undermine aspirations when choosing professions or applying for work.

4. Addressing barriers to inclusion

A recent FCDO-commissioned review concluded that the evidence on addressing barriers to employment for people with disabilities in low and middle income countries is “extremely limited [...], particularly from agriculture, livelihoods and employment programmes.”⁴ With most evidence coming from programmes with a specific focus on disability inclusion little effort seems to have been put on mainstreaming and/or capturing what works ([Meaney-Davis and Coe 2020](#)). The following summarises relevant and selective global evidence, highlights learning from Nigeria and adds insights from the LINKS Sector Scan:

Policy and institutional reform: In developed countries, evidence shows that disability discrimination legislation results in the most significant progress in workplace accommodations for people with disabilities (Rimmerman, 2013, quoted in [GSDRC 2015](#)). On the other hand, the size of the informal economy and limited legal implementation capacity has been found to limit the effectiveness of disability discrimination legislation in middle and low-income settings (Heymann et al., 2014, quoted in [GSDRC 2015](#); [Meaney-Davis and Coe 2020](#)). While Nigeria has seen progress on legislation, driven by advocacy from DPOs, often supported by donors and international NGOs, the myriads of Federal and State law, the existence of Islamic and practice of customary law and a history of poor implementation remains a concern. While further policy and institutional progress was mentioned as top priority for the limited number of private sector organisations that provided data as part of the LINKS Sector Scan the evidence globally, including from Kenya and Uganda, is cautious and inconclusive ([Meaney-Davis and Coe 2020](#)). DPOs interviewed for the LINKS Sector Scan highlighted disability-inclusive public procurement as essential business opportunity for entrepreneurs. South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia, have started to introduce public procurement targets for companies owned by women and, notably in Kenya also for people with disabilities ([UNHLP 2016](#)).

Training programmes: Internationally, there is a limited evidence base on the impact of training programmes on employment and/or livelihoods outcomes for people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries ([Fraser and Abu Al Ghaib, 2019](#)). In Nigeria, the Federal and State governments have over the years made efforts to support persons with disabilities with vocational skills through rehabilitation and vocational training centres. However, studies have shown that skills taught in these centres are insufficient, with neither the provision of training in entrepreneurship skills (e.g. basic numeracy, literacy, marketing or soft skills), nor the offer of, or linking-up of trainees to appropriate and timely provision of access to capital (LINKS Sector Scan). Programmes targeting the context-specific employment challenges of people with disabilities, including the often overlooked aspect of whether the training fulfils market demands, are more likely to be successful in improving employment rates (various, quoted in [GSDRC 2015](#)). Including people with disabilities in mainstream efforts, as for example practiced by Mafita in northern Nigeria, are seen as more efficient and sustainable than separate employment programmes for people with disabilities, nevertheless the latter are often favoured by donors and NGOs ([Fraser and Abu Al Ghaib, 2019](#), Mont, 2014, quoted in [GSDRC 2015](#)). Internationally, little evidence is available on what interventions are scalable and how, and how the cost effectiveness of training programmes can be improved (Tripney et al, 2017, quoted in [Fraser and Abu Al Ghaib, 2019](#), [Blattman and Ralston, 2015](#), [MacKenzie, 2017](#))—a key question if mainstream economic development programmes are to integrate costly training interventions.⁵

Addressing multiple barriers: Programmes that address multiple constraints to employment, including skills of people with disabilities, are promising, although there is little available evidence on these (Mitra, 2014, quoted in [GSDRC 2015](#), [Fraser and Abu Al Ghaib, 2019](#)). A partnership programme between Accenture and Leonard Cheshire in five Asian countries and South Africa provides employers with assessments and recommendations to ensure reasonable accommodations are made in workplaces, and provides skills training for people with disabilities. Over ten years 18,000 people with disabilities have been employed or started their own business through the programme ([Leonard Cheshire and Humanity Inclusion 2018](#)). Sightsavers as part of Inclusion Works has supported a mentoring programme in Nigeria (in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management, CIPM) which also supported job search and recruitment and is about to start piloting a disability-inclusive IT Bridge Academy in Nairobi which will provide participants with [CISCO certification](#) and guaranteed access to internships through private sector partners, e.g. with Safaricom, a major communications company in Kenya with a long-track record of employing people with disabilities.

⁴ The [Inclusion Works](#) programme funded by FCDO is responding to this evidence gap by testing different models of inclusive employment. So is a new programme by [IFAD](#).

⁵ Comparing costs per beneficiary for FCDO-funded programmes in Nigeria, Mafita (a skills-to-employment programme) cost £918/beneficiary, substantially more than economic development programmes taking a systemic approach, such as Propcom which cost £46 and LINKS which is assumed to cost £23/beneficiary. Source: Mafita lessons learnt webinar, Dec 2020.

Private sector and attitudinal barriers: Very few companies in Sub-Saharan Africa, e.g. Safaricom in Kenya (see Box), and elsewhere see the commercial incentives or business case for the inclusion of people with disabilities as consumers, employees and as entrepreneurs in their supply chains.⁶ The disability Sector Scan has identified companies in northern Nigeria that support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives aimed at people with disabilities. [MTN](#), through its Foundation, provides annual scholarship grants and assistive aids to people with disabilities Nigeria-wide including in Kaduna and manufacturing companies like the Dangote Group were reported to regularly donate food items both for direct consumption and as start-up materials for retailing. Currently, these CSR initiatives, often motivated by religious values, help plug some short-term gaps in the provision of services but they do remain charitable gestures. While an entry point, in order to address structural barriers to participation, a gradual but substantial shift from a welfare approach towards an inclusive business strategy would be needed, where people with disabilities are seen as essential ingredient of a successful enterprise. There are little notable employment opportunities with the private sector in the largely agrarian state of Jigawa ([Inclusive Futures 2019](#), confirmed by the LINKS Sector Scan by DPOs), JONAPWD in Kano State reported that they are “not aware of any PWDs (*sic*) that have been employed by private sector.” and DPOs in Kaduna were critical of the private sector which does not to their knowledge advertise jobs openly so people with disabilities cannot apply but did mention that textile and garment companies, through the National Union of Textile and Garment Workers, had provided capacity-building for people with disabilities engaged in fashion and tailoring ventures.

Safaricom in Kenya: a corporate drive to disability inclusion

Ownership of mobile phones and use of internet is high in Kenya. People with disabilities, however, are 12% less likely to own a mobile phone than non-disabled people. To scope this untapped market, Safaricom conducted an audit of all their products and services to quantify and understand their usage by persons with disabilities in 2017. This in combination with a brainstorming with customers with visual impairments led to changes to their biggest revenue-generating service M-Pesa. Within three months Safaricom had fully integrated an interactive voice response (IVR) platform available to all customers. Safaricom estimates that more than 3,000 customers access the service daily (without formal promotion) and that the introduction of IVR reduced fraud by 99%. With the introduction of IVR, those with low literacy and the elderly are also expected to benefit.

Through its efforts to identify, target and support job seekers with disabilities, Safaricom has also filled over half of the five per cent quota of employees with disabilities, as required according to Kenya's Persons with Disabilities Act.

Safaricom is also part of a consortium of private, public and non-profit organisations in Kenya working towards coordinating and reporting on all activities related to protecting the rights and improved employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Safaricom's journey began in 2001, starting with CSO the company has gradually moved towards an inclusive business model based on leadership commitment, deliberate targets, a strong HR function and the application of the Washington Questions.

Source: [GSMA \(2019\)](#) and author interview with Simon Brown (Sightsavers).

Access to finance was identified as most significant barrier to entrepreneurship by DPOs interviewed for the Sector Scan. Finance is sometimes provided by state governments as part of so-called “empowerment grants”, e.g. Mafita has successfully facilitated access to grants for women living with disabilities through the Kaduna State Women Empowerment Fund in 2019. However, these charity gestures are not available to the general population and are often too small to allow investments⁷ to boost enterprise start-up or growth. Some DPOs, such as the Jigawa Chapter of JONPWD, have supported their members, who often lack the financial literacy, to access micro-credit provided by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN); reportedly those who got the loan have successfully paid back. Similar initiatives exist from the Bank of Agriculture and the Bank of Industry; there is also the National Social Investment program (NSIP) being implemented by the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. [Accion Microfinance Bank](#), the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Center for Financial Inclusion are also working together to develop interest-free loan products for people with disabilities ([Thompson 2020](#)). However, it is unclear how many persons with disabilities have benefitted in total and even less clear if this is starting to shift views of people with disabilities as underserved customer segment, and thus business opportunity for banks, rather than recipients of charitable hand-outs.

⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the business case for disability inclusion see LINKS Vision and GESI Guide.

⁷ The Kaduna State Women Empowerment Fund awarded an average of N20,000 to individuals which according to beneficiaries subsequently interviewed by Mafita didn't allow them to e.g. purchase a sewing machine.

5. Conclusions and implications for LINKS

Insights from LINKS' first year of implementation largely confirmed the programme vision on disability inclusion but has highlighted challenges, provided lessons learnt and given the approach focus. While conclusions and implications are tailored to LINKS they will be relevant to other economic development programmes committed to disability inclusion in Nigeria and elsewhere. This last section will revisit each of the four pillars of LINKS' vision on disability inclusion (as outlined in the [Introduction](#)), highlight required updates and suggest specific actions and next steps.⁸

Private sector engagement: from charity to a rights-based understanding of disability as business opportunity

The concept of disability inclusion is new to many market systems programmes and incorrectly considered by many as something not well suited to market system programming because of the presumed small market share and additional costs of serving this population ([Krueger 2020](#)). LINKS' key learning in 2020 is that many more people live with or are affected by disability than narrow perceptions of disability may suggest. The [United Nations](#) refer to people with disabilities as the "world's largest minority" with the [WHO](#) estimating some 25 million persons with disabilities living in Nigeria. An internal survey in June 2020 showed that almost half of LINKS programme staff have a family member living with a disability. Ignoring disabled people and their families as consumers, potential taxpayers, workers and entrepreneurs is a substantial missed opportunity for the private and public sector.

To translate this acknowledgement into programming practice, LINKS will need to support a considerable shift from the charity model, that has been embraced by donors, DPOs and society for a long time, to a shared understanding that people with disabilities are, and can be more of an active part of the Nigerian economy. To support this journey, LINKS will:

1. Provide regular training to LINKS staff on the rights-based model of disability and support behavioural change in addition to improved knowledge (e.g. by undertaking a disability inclusion self-assessment);
2. Draw up a "cheat sheet" on the business case for disability inclusion to provide practical support to intervention teams in their engagement with partners;
3. Practice disability-inclusive communications, including rights-based language (the programme has produced an overview of terms to use and not to use in English and Hausa to guide the team) and a mindful portraying of people with disabilities without reinforcing stereotypes; and
4. Provide training on the rights-based model of disability to partners stressing relevant economic incentives for employing and integrating entrepreneurs with disabilities in supply chains.

Mainstreaming disability inclusion with a focus on agriculture

One of the key messages from LINKS disability Sector Scan, in particular from DPOs, is the need to support inclusive participation of people with disabilities in agriculture, which provides a "productive way out of poverty" ([Jonckheere 2020](#)) for large numbers of people, including women. While relevant across (rural) KKJ, this is essential in Jigawa where a thin market means employment is largely limited to the public sector ([Inclusive Futures 2019](#)) and self-employment related to agriculture is often the only option. Best practice for disability mainstreaming in agriculture is extremely limited with [Meaney-Davis and Coe \(2020\)](#) suggesting that economic development programmes have in the past placed limited focus and resources on mainstreaming.

Learning from previous FCDO experience, disability inclusion in agriculture requires specific actions to address barriers people with disabilities face (different impairments lead to different barriers). For example, [Propcom Maikarfi](#) reports relatively low prevalence rates among their beneficiaries, namely 1% in Kano, 1.3% in Kaduna and 2.5% in Kaduna. And while the programme started tracking disability inclusion in 2018, its main interventions incorporated no specific disability-inclusive actions providing an important insight to the fact that disability inclusion does not happen automatically.

First insights from the LINKS application of the Washington Group Questions show a disability prevalence rate that varies considerably across the programme's interventions in agriculture: while 6% of small-holder farmers served

⁸ LINKS has experienced significant cuts to its budget from April 2021 as part of the overall aid budget review which will impact the programme's ability to take these recommendations forward in the foreseeable future.

through the agricultural inputs intervention were classified as living with a disability this number increased to 10% in the rice value chain. Looking at more specialised agricultural roles, such as booking agents for tractor hiring or rural promoters providing Good Agricultural Practice training to farmers, prevalence rates are lower (around 4-6%), suggesting barriers to access these 'upgraded' roles. Women with disabilities were found to be significantly underrepresented among small-holder farmers and specialised roles with prevalence rates not exceeding 1%. This sends a strong message that women with disabilities experience double exclusion and will require specific attention in order to address overlapping barriers. In order to support mainstreaming LINKS will:

1. Undertake a barrier analysis at design stage (in line with guidance in the LINKS GESI Guide) for every intervention (including non-agriculture);
2. Actively and regularly consult **and** work with DPOs (a list is supplied in Annex A) and people with disabilities across the three states with a specific focus on women with disabilities who are often underrepresented in DPO leadership ([Elekwe and Ebenso, 2016](#)) at all stages of the intervention; and
3. Facilitate internal programme learning on mainstreaming disability inclusion from one intervention to the other. (This also helps to avoid "over-consulting or -surveying" people with disabilities and respect their time.)

Targeted interventions addressing multiple barriers

The LINKS GESI Vision stresses that while the majority of the breadth of LINKS impact on people with disabilities comes from mainstreaming, targeted interventions are well-placed to complement this (through a depth of impact), especially for women with disabilities who risk being left behind by mainstreaming. Much effort, through the literature and reviewing global best practice (e.g. on skills training interventions), and discussion, including with other programmes, has gone into selecting and scoping targeted interventions suitable for LINKS to support. The Sector Scan has provided important insights for the following short-list of interventions that will be scoped further:

1. Disability-inclusive public procurement in Jigawa with targets for disabled entrepreneurs (and female-led enterprises).
2. Engagement with a private sector entity (e.g. MTN, Dangote) to scope if there is room to build on their commitment to provide CSR and integrate people with disabilities systematically as employees, entrepreneurs in value chains and/or customers as part of an inclusive business model; and
3. Provide financial literacy-training to selected DPOs (and women's groups) and link them with financial institutions that have products for people with disabilities on offer.

Filling data and evidence gaps

Existing literature, the LINKS Sector Scan and other stakeholders agree Nigeria is a data-poor environment when it comes to disability prevalence rates and disability data more generally. Accurate prevalence rates are a prerequisite for correctly measuring and reporting the extent of inclusion in LINKS interventions. While the methodological framework and advice is clear through the [Washington Group Short Set on Functioning questions](#) LINKS has learnt that an environment of high stigma in combination with Hausa as largely oral language brings specific challenges.

We found that working with a Hausa translation of the Washington Question is problematic for two reasons: Hausa varies across and within the three LINKS states and agreeing on one translated version of the Washington Questions proved difficult. Moreover, enumerators speak but are rarely able to read Hausa confidently, requiring written questionnaires in English. LINKS has responded by keeping the English questionnaires and providing additional training to enumerators to ensure an accurate recall of the Hausa translation and knowledge on how to deliver questions to ensure consistent application.

Existing stigma and prejudice against people with disabilities led LINKS to follow a two-pronged approach of carefully following the Washington Group's advice for data collection (e.g. not to mention the term disability when questions are asked) and in parallel, through the intervention itself, starting to openly talk about stigma, e.g. by stressing LINKS' commitment to disability inclusion in training sessions. Not an easy balancing act, but initial insights show that the number of people refusing to answer the WG Questions decreased from approximately 1% across interventions (and almost 7% in one specific intervention) during early baselines assessment to practically zero at the end of 2020. In order to continue to filling data and evidence gaps, LINKS will:

1. Continue to carefully monitor both, the prevalence and response rate, for each data collection activity. Should response rates or prevalence rates be lower (or higher) than expected, an additional enquiry will be undertaken;

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2. Regular training on the correct application of the Washington group questions will be provided to enumerators in addition to a more general training of disability inclusion;
3. Barrier analyses for each intervention (as outlined in the previous sub-section) will allow for data gaps on why people with disabilities may be excluded from economic development organisations. LINKS will summarise insights from these in an annual learning note.

LINKS is the first FCDO-funded mainstream economic development programme that has quantifiable targets for job creation for people living with disabilities in Nigeria. And while evidence on disability-targeted programming is increasing, very little is still known what works to mainstreaming disability inclusion in economic development programming. This report reflected on learning from LINKS' first year but understanding—and documenting—what works and what does not work (and why) will be a key theme for LINKS going forward.

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Annex A: List of Disabled People's Organisations

National-level DPOs

- Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD)
- Nigeria National Association of the Deaf
- Spinal Cord Injuries Association of Nigeria (SCIAN)
- Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB)
- Nigeria Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities (NAPPD)
- Association of Intellectual and Development Disabilities in Nigeria
- Nigeria Association of Persons with Albinism

DPOs in Kano state

- Kanawa Educational Foundation For The Disabled
- National Association of Persons with Physical Disability Kano State Chapter
- Kano state Initiative of Person with Special Needs (Disabled)
- Matalison Welfare Foundation
- Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), Kano State Chapter
- Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB), Kano State Chapter
- Kano State Deaf Youth Advocacy For Development (KADYAD)
- CREAPLE
- Kano state initiative of people with disability
- Hope Stead Initiative
- Rights and Privileges of Persons with Disability Development Initiative
- Spinal Cord Injuries Association of Nigeria, Kano Chapter
- Albino association of Nigeria, Kano chapter
- Kano state sign language interpreters association
- Nigeria National Association of the Deaf (NNAD), Kano State Chapter
- Orphans and women support initiative

DPOs in Kaduna state

- Joint National Association Of Person With Disabilities (JONAPWDS) Kaduna
- Nagarta Raminsu Association
- Suleiman Aromcy 1010 Foundation
- Disability Resource Foundation of Nigeria
- Center for Empowering Women with Physical Disabilities, Initiatives Kaduna
- Heart to Heart inclusive education foundations
- United Persons With Disability Nigeria
- Divine Women Association
- Disability Office Against Drugs (DOAD)
- Arewa Freedom of The Blind Multipurpose Cooperative Society
- Improvement to the Respect of Social Status of The Disabled
- Abantu for Development

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- Knowledge For The Blind Initiative
- Nigeria National Association of the Deaf (NNAD), Kaduna State Chapter
- Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB), Kaduna State Chapter
- National Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities, Kaduna State Chapter
- Spinal Cord Injuries Association of Nigeria (SCIAN), Kaduna State Chapter
- Nigeria Association of Persons with Albinism, Kaduna State Chapter

DPOs in Jigawa state

- Joint National Association of Persons With Disabilities (JONAPWDS), Jigawa State Chapter
- Nigeria National Association for the Deaf
- Nigeria Association for the Blind, Jigawa state
- IDEA, Jigawa State
- Spinal cord injury association
- National Association of persons with physical challenges in Nigeria



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The information contained in this publication 'Disability Inclusion: Emerging lessons and future direction for LINKS Nigeria', is of a general nature. Although we endeavor to provide accurate and timely information, there can be no guarantee that such information is accurate as of the date it is received or that it will continue to be accurate in the future. No one should act on such information without appropriate professional advice.

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