



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

# What Works? Disability Inclusion in Practice

## Case study from WFP Lebanon



Trinity College Dublin  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

This learning note is part of a series that shares learning from WFP country offices implementing novel disability inclusion (DI) initiatives. This note links to broader research undertaken by Trinity College Dublin to find out 'what works' for making WFP programmes inclusive of persons with disabilities, and ensuring no one is left behind in the fight against hunger.

The series is designed to share practical examples from the field, and drivers of system level change – shifting inclusion from being something that WFP does, to the way that WFP does things. If you are inspired by these initiatives, you can find many additional resources [here](#).

## Introduction

Evidence is a necessary foundation for building effective and inclusive responses to hunger and food insecurity. In 2022-2023, Lebanon country office (CO) implemented a mixed methods study to better understand the local relationship between disability and food insecurity. The CO aimed to use the exercise to position WFP as a credible disability inclusion actor, and to improve the effectiveness of WFP programming in reaching and engaging with persons with disabilities who experience, or are vulnerable to, food insecurity.

August 2023

## SYSTEM LEVEL DRIVERS OF DI SUCCESS IN WFP

### Authenticity:

Systems level research within WFP shows that DI efforts are most successful when they are perceived - both internally and externally - as arising from an authentic desire to change, rather than a tick-box exercise. Collaborating with local organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD's) was an authentic integration of 'nothing about us, without us' into WFP Lebanon's way of working. Working with cooperating partners to implement the study tangibly and publicly reinforced WFP's commitment to inclusion.

### Leadership:

Systems level research within WFP consistently highlights the need for DI initiatives to be endorsed and supported by senior leadership. In Lebanon, the CO leadership supported bringing in a dedicated DI consultant and established a high-level steering committee to provide a governance structure for follow-up action.

## WHAT WAS THE INITIATIVE?

A disability focused study consisting of a face-to-face survey with 1,081 participants; five key informant interviews; 16 focus group discussions with 127 participants, and consultations with local organisations of persons with disabilities. A detailed methodology and findings are available in the public [report](#).

## WHY WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

*"it was absolutely crucial that we put this in context"*

In addition to gathering specific information, the dedicated study was used to galvanise attention and interest for DI within the CO, and to provide a baseline for routine monitoring and measurement of future progress. Lebanon CO decided on a study as they were already committed to becoming more inclusive, and needed specific and contextualised information to plan evidence-based programming to meet this population's needs.

**Lessons Learned:** A disability specific study can successfully serve multiple uses, from generating a baseline to serving as an advocacy tool. This is most effective when the purpose of the activity is clear from the start.

## HOW WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

*"the result was very important, but the process was as important"*

The study process took 5-6 months under the leadership of a dedicated DI focal point, who also had other duties. Advance allocation of a dedicated budget and careful sequencing of activities were crucial to success. Collaboration across teams was important, but sometimes challenging, e.g., working out how to formally involve OPDs as collaborators, and working with cooperating partners whose initial deliverables did not include the study.

**Lessons Learned:** Soft skills are just as important as technical expertise, and passion, persistence, and persuasion may be needed to overcome structural challenges, such as contracting processes and competing priorities.





## WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?

*“data is an absolutely crucial starting point”*

Following this study, WFP Lebanon positioned itself as a strong disability inclusion actor both externally and internally, and initiated several action plans to increase accessibility and inclusion across its activities. Some examples are available on page 7 of the study [report](#).

**Lessons Learned:** Producing data should be viewed as a starting point, and not an end goal. A study does not need to be huge to be impactful, and a smaller study than this example from Lebanon CO could still provide useful information and serve as a galvanising point for engagement and uptake.

## WHAT COMES NEXT?

Lebanon CO created a governance structure to support action and momentum following the study. Three elements were put in place to progress the impact of the study: a senior steering committee; a champion’s network among CO staff; and new, mandatory reporting requirements.

**Lessons Learned:** To lead to more inclusive actions and outcomes, a study needs a framework within which the data can spur action. Local reflections also suggested that having the right technical expertise was necessary, and while that may require a short-term or specialist consultant, an integrated team member with credibility and time helps with implementation and sustainability.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If you are planning to implement a disability specific data activity such as a dedicated survey, ensuring the key drivers of authentic engagement and leadership can increase success and impact.

These drivers increase the likelihood of your data activity leading to a more inclusive way of doing things.

**1. Authenticity:** Authentic engagement with OPDs should begin early, be sufficiently resourced and be truly collaborative. Such engagement makes inclusive activities more authentic to WFP personnel, cooperating partners, donors and the communities they serve. Guidance for setting up such collaborations is available [here](#).

**2. Support from leadership** smooths the path for a successful activity. If you are in a leadership role, or can recruit leadership support, allocation of tangible resources and strategic prioritisation of DI are key. An equally important element of leadership buy-in is the visible and vocal endorsement of disability inclusion as part of WFP’s mandate and activities.

## Conclusion

Local evidence about the relationship between disability and food insecurity is often needed to develop appropriate responses within country level WFP programming. As successfully demonstrated by WFP Lebanon, a dedicated study can provide necessary information while also raising the profile of disability inclusion, and of WFP as an inclusive actor. Collaborating with OPDs is a powerful way to increase the authenticity and quality of such research, and structured and visible support from senior levels helps to overcome challenges, maximise impact, and support evidence-based action.

Trinity College Dublin Research Team:  
Claire O’Reilly & Caroline Jagoe