



Lessons learned

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## Making emergency education more inclusive for children with disabilities

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Somalia

June 2024

LL 25-2



## Background

The practice was collected as part of the 'From Guidelines to Action (FG2A)' project "supporting the operationalization and localization of **IASC Guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action**" funded by ECHO and CDP.

This practice was collected from **Finn Church Aid (FCA)**. This organization attended the review, adapt, action and learning (RAAL Lab) in May 2023 with one staff the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Officer. The RAAL Lab is a capacity strengthening initiative and was used in combination with the adapted version of the **DRG Learning modules**, which were designed to operationalize the **IASC guidelines on disability inclusion**. During the RAAL Lab workshop the participant applied IASC guidelines to their project cycle management. As part of the technical follow up process Humanity & Inclusion (HI) team collected best practices to understand better how the organization was taking forward the learning from the RAAL Lab.

## What challenge is this practice addressing

Many children with disabilities in Somalia are not able to attend the school due to the various barriers continue to hamper their access to education. According to a rapid assessment report analyzing situation of children with disabilities in Somalia, about 40% of support persons of children with disabilities reported that children with disabilities do not attend school due to lack of facilities and resources. This includes schools and teachers, appropriate learning materials, school fees, appropriate transport means, assistive devices and long distances from school".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, multiple misperceptions about children with disabilities are harbored by most people. They believe that children with disabilities would not be able to study because of the nature of their impairment, or fear that the children with disabilities would be abused. They also lacked awareness about the children with disabilities' rights to education.

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**1** A rapid assessment of the status of children with disabilities in Somalia pg.9 & 10 (September 2020) available at [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/rapid-assessment-children-with-disabilites-insomalia\\_report\\_fa\\_digital-1-1\\_1.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/rapid-assessment-children-with-disabilites-insomalia_report_fa_digital-1-1_1.pdf)

Finn Church Aid (FCA), an international NGO, is implementing an education project in hard-to-reach areas of Somalia. The project aims to improve access to education for children in southwest state. Before the practice, FCA partnered with the Disability Aid Foundation (DAF) to implement the inclusive education activity. DAF is a disability - focused national organization that seeks to empower Persons with Disabilities and their communities in Somalia. The partnership with DAF was also one of the factors for success. The most significant challenges at FCA were that the staff lacked confidence, understanding, and skills in disability inclusive programming and monitoring in line with [IASC guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action](#).

The guidelines and tools used for data collection and monitoring were not disability inclusive. The data on children with disabilities was not representative of all types of children with disabilities thus many children with disabilities were left behind. There was a lack of reliable data on the specific support requirements, barriers, and risks faced by children with disabilities. This information was crucial for allocating resources effectively and addressing the specific requirements such as children with disabilities are provided with inclusive classrooms, accessible latrines, needed assistive devices, and improved practices of teachers to teach to children with disabilities.

## How the practice developed

The practice developed with the objective of adapting the data collection and monitoring tools in line with [IASC guidelines on disability inclusion](#) and developing the staff's technical knowledge, confidence and capacity. It was assumed that better data and monitoring processes would help the staff to identify and remove the barriers faced by children with disabilities in accessing inclusive education, through addressing the specific requirements of children with disabilities. Specific requirements and barriers to be identified through data and monitoring include for instance:

1. the need for and provision of assistive devices to children with disabilities,
2. the change of misperceptions towards inclusive education,
3. the identification of barriers and adaptation of physical infrastructure of the schools (classrooms modification and accessible WASH facilities), or
4. the identification of institutional barriers within schools, and respective training of teachers on inclusive teaching methodologies.

Firstly, after attending the RAAL Lab, FCA took various steps to integrate the must-do actions in their work: Advance disability data collection, Engaging Organizations of persons with disabilities in this project, and Removing barriers.

Enhance data collection: FCA adapted their assessment and data collection tools and conducted an assessment, identified the barriers faced by children with disabilities in accessing education. This involved consultations with community members, including parents of children with disabilities, local authorities, and organizations of persons with disabilities.

Engaging Organizations of persons with disabilities: The intervention strategy was developed in collaboration with local organizations of persons with disabilities, local authorities for education, and community leaders. It was the first time that the inclusive education plan was developed at community level. This plan outlines strategies to address the identified barriers.

Removal of Barriers: After identifying different barriers through adapted assessment tools and processes, the project started to address these. Training was conducted for school's teachers, school administrators, and community members on inclusive education practices and inclusive teaching methodologies. This included sensitization on disability rights, identifying and addressing individual learning needs, and promoting inclusive classroom environments, removing institutional barriers to education. FCA worked with local partners to adapt school infrastructure to be accessible for children with disabilities, to remove environmental barriers. FCA established support mechanisms such as resource rooms, where children with disabilities can access learning assistance and other support. They also organized awareness campaigns for parents and the community to foster acceptance and inclusion. The community was sensitized on importance of inclusive education for children with disabilities and how they can learn like any other children in the community. This helped to address and remove attitudinal barriers.

The local organizations of persons with disabilities were engaged in the implementation of the project activities as an implementing partner. The community education committees were sensitized on the importance of inclusive education and involved in ensuring that all children are encouraged to attend schools irrespective of their disability, age and gender. The parents of children with disabilities were actively involved at all stages of the interventions.

## What were the most significant results

After attending the RAAL Lab and familiarizing with the content of the IASC Guidelines on disability inclusion, the IASC guidelines became a valuable resource for adapting tools, guidance and defining the approach. As a result, better quality disability data was collected, more systematically using the [Washington group short set of questions \(WG-SS\)](#). The collected data was systematically disaggregated to identify differences between children with different types of difficulties and between children with and without disabilities. This highlighted the barriers and risks children with disabilities face when accessing education.

With better data collection, resources were more appropriately allocated to address all the specific requirements of children with disabilities. The adjusting of resources from different means ensured the more strategic removal of barriers impeding access to education. These actions included the allocation of resources to address specific requirements of children with disabilities and reasonable accommodation cost for persons with disabilities (participating in the project activities) and collaboration with local partners. Lastly, resources were allocated to remove institutional barriers through teacher training on inclusive and accessible teaching methodologies allowing teachers to acquire inclusive teaching skills and methods.

The most significant changes relate to FCA becoming empowered to adapt their data collection and ultimately adapt their programming and resourcing to remove barriers and address specific requirements, after attending the RAAL Lab. As a result, there was an increase in the number of children with disabilities to access primary education in southwest states hard to reach area. In combination with the part's hard to reach areas.

## What were key influencing factors or drivers for change

The provision of the RAAL Lab workshop provided by HI was the factor that facilitated FCA's approach to be aligned with the IASC Guidelines. The major factors include:

1. Organizational culture and commitment to disability inclusion is crucial for success of disability inclusive response, which includes recognizing the rights of persons with disabilities, valuing their meaningful participation, and allocating appropriate resources
2. Starting to apply learning from the RAAL Lab by changing their needs assessment to become more disability inclusive was crucial to inform further programming, including resourcing allocation. This helped to identify the barriers and challenges faced by children with disabilities. This led to effective planning and addressing the specific requirements.
3. Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, their families, and relevant stakeholders ensured a comprehensive understanding of their needs.
4. Removal of Barriers:
  - Providing training and capacity-building opportunities for staff members and relevant stakeholders was crucial to remove barriers faced by children in learning processes.
  - Adaptation of infrastructure and services; ensuring that physical infrastructure, services, and communication methods are accessible and inclusive is critical which involved making physical modifications to buildings, providing assistive devices, offering alternative communication methods, and considering universal design principles.
5. **Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the barriers and the situation of children with disabilities:** Regular monitoring and evaluation were processes in place at FCA. By adapting their practices to be more disability-inclusive, they could also monitor better the situation of children with disabilities.
6. **Cultivating a supportive environment:** Fostering an inclusive and supportive environment within the organization or team was crucial to achieve a change in programming.



## Recommendations to facilitate the replication of this practice

1. Ensure needs assessments processes and tools are disability inclusive. This can include barriers and facilitator assessments at the beginning of the project.
2. **Meaningful participation of OPDs:** DAF, the organization of persons with disabilities had a critical role in the identification of children with disabilities, awareness raising, designing and implementation of inclusive education activities.
3. Adapt programming by resourcing reasonable accommodation, access to specific requirements and removal of barriers during the designing phase of the project to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities and of OPDs as partners in the implementation.

## Point of view

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The RAAL Lab Participant from FCA said, “I am thankful to HI for providing insight on IASC Guidelines which makes our work easier and systematic through applying key actions and approaches such as four must do actions of IASC Guidelines and twin-track approach within our project. We adapted our assessment and monitoring tools for more disability inclusive”.

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# Copyright

## Cover Image

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The illustration takes place inside a school, which is a temporary shelter, in an internally displaced camp. There are children in an accessible classroom, including children with and without disabilities.

The girls wear headscarf, and the boys wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

Children with disabilities include a girl in a wheelchair, and a boy using crutches. The students with and without disabilities and teacher show a positive attitude.

The teacher uses inclusive teaching methodology, such as the use of sign languages, large fonts, communication boards, etc. The school entrance features a ramp. There is an accessible bathroom with universal signage for persons with disabilities near the classroom.

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The collection of case studies was a part of the '[From Guidelines to Action \(FG2A\)](#)' project, supporting the operationalization and localization of [IASC Guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action](#), funded by ECHO and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy.

The eight case studies come from protection and food security humanitarian organizations who are working on the Syria and Somalia responses. These organizations participated in Review, Adapt, Action and Learning (RAAL) laboratories on how to make food security or protection programming more disability inclusive. The RAAL Lab is a capacity strengthening initiative and was used in combination with the adapted version of the [DRG Learning modules](#), which are designed to operationalize [the IASC guidelines on disability inclusion](#).

The case studies demonstrate how humanitarian tools and/or operational practices were adapted to become more disability-inclusive.

We hope these case studies will contribute towards fostering inter-agency learning and enhance disability inclusive practices in humanitarian action. We would like to thank the participating organizations for their input and willingness to engage in this process. Please note that for reasons of security the names of organizations from some of the case studies have not been included.

Find out more by contacting us at [inclusion@hi.org](mailto:inclusion@hi.org)

