

Vocational training and meaningful employment for women in the West Bank: An intersectional and transformative approach to disability inclusion



Disability Inclusion Case Study Series: Preface and Acknowledgements

Preface

In 2019, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) released the *IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*, setting out essential actions that humanitarian actors must take to effectively identify and respond to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. Shortly after the launch of these Guidelines, the global [Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with disabilities in humanitarian action](#) was launched (the Disability Reference Group or DRG). Members of the DRG Working Group 1 (DRG WG 1) collaborated to promote and support the operationalisation and implementation of the IASC Guidelines. Over the last few years, they have received multiple requests and expressions of interest from practitioners to facilitate a deep dive into examples from the field of good and promising practices around the implementation of the IASC Guidelines on disability inclusion.

This case study series is the answer to these requests and expressions of interest to provide in-depth exploration for humanitarian practitioners seeking to be more disability inclusive in their work by sharing the stories of what this work can be like in the field. This series aims to address the lack of detailed examination of successful projects and the results they achieved through an analysis of their experiences, reflections, and the lessons they learned about disability inclusion.

Funding for the development of the case study series comes from a two-year project ‘From Guidelines to Action: Promoting Learning, Localisation and Adaptation of the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with disabilities in humanitarian action’. The project is financed by ECHO, the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) and implemented by Humanity & Inclusion/Handicap International.

Selection of good and promising practices

In 2023, the DRG WG1 launched a call for good and promising practices on ‘what works’ for transforming existing humanitarian programming into disability-inclusive humanitarian programming with the aim of fostering learning between humanitarian agencies, funded by CDP. A technical review committee (TRC), comprised of humanitarian practitioners working towards disability inclusive programming, all members of the DRG WG 1, was established to design and support the selection process.

The call for case studies was launched early 2023. Case studies were selected for focussing on various priority thematic areas that reflected the “must do” actions for



disability inclusive programming of the IASC Guidelines on Disability Inclusion. These thematic areas were identified as essential for disability-inclusive coordination efforts and programming across all humanitarian sectors to support meaningful participation and equitable access to humanitarian assistance and protection for people with disabilities. The thematic areas were:

- 1 Empowerment of persons with disabilities,
- 2 Capacity development of humanitarian actors, including organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs),
- 3 Identification and removal of barriers,
- 4 Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, and
- 5 Quality disability data collection and disaggregation.

Of 41 initial submissions, 21 organisations were selected based on agreed criteria¹ and invited by the TRC members to participate in two laboratory-style peer review and learning workshops, with 19 organisations participating. The goals of these two workshop were not only to identify good practices of disability inclusion, but also to foster learning between humanitarian agencies as they each shared their projects. The TRC established a jury for the final selection² by inviting seven experts on inclusive humanitarian action from academia, think-tanks, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, humanitarian agencies as well as the DRG co-chair. During the workshops each submission was scored by the jury members and other workshop participants as well as being documented and illustrated [as briefs in a workshop report](#). The top 3 scoring good practices were then selected for developing the more detailed case studies in this series.

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1. (A) Completeness, (B) Humanitarian Action Focus, (C1) Impact, (C2) Sustainability, (C3) Replicability, (C4) Relevance to the objective of the call, (C5) Innovation, (D) Compliance with the thematic areas
 2. Final selection criteria used by the jury were: Innovation & learning potential, Demonstrated impact, Scalability and/or replicability potential, and an additional score around cross-disability and diversity among persons with disabilities.

Methods for case study development

To ensure the case studies provided sufficient detail and depth for practitioners, the research methods for all three case studies comprised of reviewing key program materials and other background and published documents, as well as multiple and phased key informant interviews (KIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with stakeholders involved in each project.

Adopting ethical storytelling principles to ensure the process was respectful and empowering for contributors, a series of validation workshops provided opportunities for reflection, analysis, and feedback. Organisations worked with the author to provide concrete guidance on disability inclusion in humanitarian action, including updated indicators and tools where possible.

Each case study is available in written and online, interactive versions. The online versions have been designed to support learning and development and include audio/visual clips and reflections from those involved in each project.

Objectives and key themes emerging

The objectives of the case study series are to provide detailed descriptions not only of what was done in each project, but how and why, as well as exploring the challenges and lessons learned about disability inclusion in humanitarian contexts.

This will allow users of the case study to gain guidance on the different aspects and methods for disability inclusion, based on ongoing or recently concluded projects. It also means that users will have enough detail to adapt or modify specific elements of each project to suit their own needs, including opportunities to enhance capacity to meaningfully engage with, and include persons with disabilities in humanitarian responses.



This table presents a summary of the 3 case studies that were produced as part of this project:

No.	Case study	Location	Organisations	Key themes
1	Vocational training and meaningful employment for women in the West Bank: An intersectional and transformative approach to disability inclusion	West Bank and Jerusalem	LWF-Jerusalem and CWLR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectionality and disability inclusion for women with and without disabilities • Transformative changes through programming that addresses barriers and creates enablers • Developing data collection and analysis tools to ultimately improve pathways to meaningful employment • Encouraging self-confidence and allyship through role models and experiential learning
2	No longer hidden: Inclusion Ambassadors in North East Syria – A localised approach to disability inclusion	North East Syria	Humanity & Inclusion Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities as a first step towards localisation and empowerment to lead • Supporting persons with disabilities to organise and engage in collective action to improve disability inclusion • Collaborative approaches to capacity strengthening, including co-designing with people with disabilities • Changing attitudes through local leadership provided by people with disabilities and the support needed to achieve this
3	Ahlan Simsim and empowerment through representation: Mainstreaming disability inclusion in early childhood development for crisis-affected children in the Middle East	Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria	International Rescue Committee and Sesame Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic representation of people (and children) with disabilities and its power to transform attitudes and behaviours • Mainstreaming disability inclusion in mass media and direct services for crisis-affected young children and their caregivers • Supporting disability inclusion through varied peer-based approaches to capacity strengthening and confronting stereotypes and misconceptions • Empowering those working with children and caregivers to promote and practice disability inclusion



Disability in humanitarian contexts is often described as a “hidden crisis”. And each organisation in these case studies experienced challenges reaching people with disabilities, whether there were established organisations for persons with disabilities in their operational context or not.

Therefore, one of the common threads through these case studies illuminates the need for deliberate and sustained action to ensure programmes and responses are disability inclusive. It is often not enough to subsume disability under a broad banner of inclusion; dedicated staff and resources may be needed to reach and work meaningfully with people with disabilities to identify barriers and create enablers to their participation in humanitarian action and beyond. Moreover, these case studies show us that for staff and partners, we need to provide guidance and support through concrete actions they can take to be more disability inclusive.

The other major theme that emerges from these case studies is the power of representation and meaningful participation. Whether through muppets, ambassadors, advisory committees, or other approaches, ensuring people with disabilities are at the forefront as colleagues, or sharing their lived experiences, needs, and capacities is crucial to disability inclusion efforts. As humanitarians, we must make all efforts to provide the support and space for people with disabilities to engage as humanitarian actors and represent themselves and to ensure they share their stories in ways that authentically reflect who they are.

By telling the stories of each organisation’s process (and adaptation) to design a program that reaches and includes people with disabilities in today’s humanitarian contexts, it is hoped that practitioners will be inspired to follow in their footsteps, learn from their missteps, and ultimately take definitive action to ensure disability inclusion is an operational reality, and not only a principled goal.

Taken together, it is also hoped that the lessons learned in these case studies will contribute to a growing body of knowledge and analysis on the varied but concrete ways that disability inclusion in humanitarian action can be strengthened and improved now and into the future.

Acknowledgements

Research, interviews, and Material written by: Samantha Newman (lead consultant)

- **Project management from HI and DRG WG 1 Co-leads:** Charles Lunn (Humanity & Inclusion, HI), Ulrike Last (HI) & Pauline Thivillier (International Rescue Committee, IRC)

While these case studies have been prepared with guidance and input from the global [Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with disabilities in humanitarian action \(DRG WG1\)](#), they would not have been possible without the efforts, contributions, and collaboration of all the agencies and individuals who supported the development of this series, including:

- Canadian Lutheran World Relief
- Humanity & Inclusion/Handicap International
- International Rescue Committee
- Lutheran World Federation-Jerusalem

The DRG extends its deep gratitude to the staff of these organisations, as well as partners and affected populations who contributed so generously to these case studies. Their dedicated efforts, and honest reflections and insights, will inspire and help us all to be more disability inclusive in our work.

While these contributions have been essential to the development of this series, the content of the case studies is the sole responsibility of the DRG.

This case study series was produced with the financial assistance of Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) and ECHO through Humanity & Inclusion’s ‘From Guidelines to Action: Promoting Learning, Localisation and Adaptation of the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with disabilities in humanitarian action’ project.

Where photographs included in these case studies were provided by the organisations, they were taken with the permission of subjects and, in the case of children, with the permission of their caregivers if appropriate. Individuals depicted in any photos should not be attributed with quotations or facts presented in the case study.

For feedback, suggestions or more information, please contact:
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“It started with a visit.” (TVET Director)



Executive Summary

In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, unemployment and poverty are widespread for Palestinians. Here, the private sector consists not of large, thriving companies, but of small businesses – many of them struggling to survive. As a result, job opportunities are severely limited for most Palestinians. However, it is also a place where conservative norms and discriminatory practices further entrench the exclusion many women and people with disabilities experience in their daily lives. In this context, where so many are desperately seeking work, and where there is often resistance to the idea of women or people with disabilities working, how are women with and without disabilities able to find a pathway to any kind of employment, let alone a meaningful one?

For Lutheran World Federation Jerusalem (LWF-J) and Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR), one solution lay with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes they had been working with for years – a targeted focus on increasing the opportunities for women to successfully participate in, and graduate from their courses – and ultimately find meaningful work. Now in its fifth year of a six-year project, and funded by Global Affairs Canada, the Gender-Responsive and Inclusive (technical and vocational education and) Training (“GRIT” project) aims for transformative change for women with and without disabilities by creating a series of interventions aimed at removing the cultural, financial, and systemic barriers and creating enablers to inclusion instead.

This case study will explore the different steps and elements of the GRIT project’s interventions, with a particular focus on women with disabilities. Beginning with the initial analysis to better understand the specific barriers women with and without disabilities face, it resulted in the design and implementation of the first **gender and disability inclusion audit** for TVET institutes in the West Bank. These audits, nine so far, have provided pathways for each TVET institute to remove barriers to enrolment and successful completion of their courses that women with and without disabilities face.

LWF and CLWR didn’t stop there. The case study will also explore the financial supports provided for women students with and without disabilities (such as scholarships and financial support for transportation and child-care needs) and after graduation (e.g., start-up support and internships). Lastly, it will explain the series of community-based interventions aimed at reaching women and their families and persuading them to consider vocational pathways to gaining meaningful employment.

The impacts of this project have been wide-reaching. As a result of the nine TVET institutes audited, most have adopted gender and disability inclusion policies and action plans and implemented infrastructure and access improvements – the remaining are expected to have done so by the end of the project. There has also been significant capacity building for staff and students. By the end of 2024, more than 800 women will have received



some form of financial assistance. And there have been almost 200 community outreach events, reaching thousands of people in the West Bank and Jerusalem. While COVID-19 and recent armed conflict in Israel and Gaza have presented challenges, the GRIT team have adapted as needed.

Today, TVET enrolment numbers for women with disabilities have tripled since the program began, and the number of women overall receiving training at TVET institutes has increased by 62%. Women with and without disabilities have reported experiencing greater accessibility and support to complete their courses and to finding employment after graduating. Supporting these efforts there is now an Advisory Committee comprised of former women students with disabilities who work with TVET institutes to continue implementing disability inclusive measures.

This case study reveals insights and lessons learned on the interventions needed when taking an intersectional and transformative approach to gender and disability inclusion. It illustrates the additional barriers to participation most women with disabilities face, requiring targeted and specific action with multiple stakeholders (e.g., working with TVETs, OPDs, government authorities, communities, and women with disabilities) and at multiple levels by identifying concrete institutional, economic, and social supports needed to meet the specific needs of women with disabilities. It requires considering each woman's unique hopes and dreams, strengths and skills, and specific needs.

Among the lessons learned explored in the case study are:



The importance of developing strong partnerships and collaboration with Organisations for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and other relevant Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)



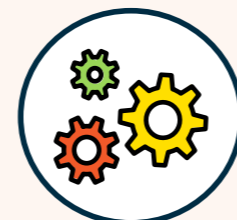
The value of sharing success stories of women



How essential it is for women with and without disabilities to have support from their families and the need to persuade (often male) opponents to becoming allies



The need to create experiential capacity building opportunities for staff that aims to change attitudes, as well as develop skills



The benefits of creating reliable methods for gathering data to support targeted decision-making and responses, particularly in changing contexts

As one of the GRIT team explained, transformative change is only possible when everyone works together over a sustained period of time to change the attitudes and beliefs of the people who comprise the systems and societies we are working within. This case study shows us that beginning this work can create momentum to outlast any single project or program.



Introduction: How can women in the West Bank find pathways to meaningful work?

The West Bank remains in a state of protracted crisis, characterised by increasing security concerns, and a deepening crisis in the Palestinian economy. It is also a place that has also undergone rapid demographic growth and urbanisation¹. While all Palestinians feel the effects of this, for women with disabilities the effects are particularly severe, including economically, with the prospects of finding meaningful work severely limited. These Palestinian women face exacerbated marginalisation and disadvantage – not only due to gender and ability considerations, but also age, socio-economic and refugee status, and geography (remoteness to urban areas).

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has the potential to be a vital pathway to improving women's education and employment prospects, capable of empowering women socially and economically. However, women with disabilities are frequently excluded by a wide range of financial, physical, attitudinal, and institutional barriers preventing their access. For almost all women with disabilities, meaningful employment has remained an illusory dream.

Lutheran World Federation Jerusalem (LWF-J) has been present in East Jerusalem and the West Bank since 1948, with a particular focus on vocational education and employment support, among other projects. LWF-J's partnership with Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) began at the same time. Since 2006, Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) has worked closely with LWF-J's vocational training program. In 2019, LWF-J and CLWR partnered to focus on ways to encourage more women, including women with disabilities, to access vocational training in the West Bank and Jerusalem. They wanted to take action to make this pathway from education and training to employment more inclusive, particularly for women with disabilities.



*The economic situation is difficult.
Academic programs take a long time.
TVET is shorter programs and with GRIT
support I can get to work and earning
money faster. (Trainee, F, Ramallah)*

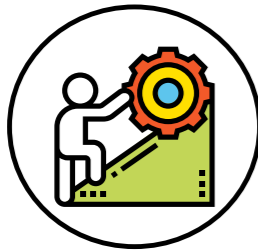
1. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), occupied Palestinian territory, available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/country/opt>



The result was the design of the “GRIT” project, which stands for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive (technical and vocational education and) Training. This is a 6-year, multi-million-dollar project which supports women with and without disabilities to achieve improved and equitable learning and employment goals. It began in 2020 and is funded by Global Affairs Canada.

With the aim of overcoming individual, community, and institutional barriers, the project (concluding in June 2025) focuses on improving access, quality, and systems within TVET institutes in the West Bank for women and girls, including women with disabilities.

This case study will explore the multi-faceted and intersectional approach LWF-J and CLWR took to provide the support needed to see more women with disabilities successfully completing their education and training to find gainful employment and, in some cases, start their own businesses. As the project enters its fifth year, it has already started to see significant improvements and a three-fold increase in women with disabilities enrolling in TVET courses.



The Challenge: How can we encourage more women with disabilities to pursue vocational learning?

Before being able to answer this question, CLWR and LWF-J needed to get a clearer picture of the lived realities for women with and without disabilities, their practical and strategic needs, and any opportunities available to support their participation in not only TVETs and the labour market, but also in society more broadly.

Therefore, the first step was to carry out a gender analysis and needs assessment to understand the barriers that limit the participation of women and girls, including those with disabilities, in vocational education and labour force opportunities. It also sought to identify possible ways to reduce barriers, support women to develop their market-relevant skills and increase their access to employment opportunities.

An intersectional lens was applied to the gender analysis which meant not only examining gender-related factors, but also considering how socio-economic status, disability status, and other factors impacted on the overall picture. The analysis included broad consultations with communities, government and private sector representatives, and individual women, including women with disabilities. The findings were then used to inform the design of the project.

For women with disabilities, the analysis revealed multiple, intersecting barriers to participating in vocational courses. The result of these barriers was that there very few women students with disabilities and recent graduates attending various TVET institutes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Why conduct a gender analysis?

Gender analysis is the starting point for gender mainstreaming. Before any decisions are made and plans are outlined, the gender equality situation in a given context must be analysed and expected results identified. A gender analysis should include both quantitative (statistics) and qualitative data (analytical and relative). It highlights specific vulnerabilities of women and men, girls and boys, and identifies factors that may increase one's vulnerability including age and disability status. It always has an empowerment perspective, highlighting the agency and potential for change in each group.



The barriers revealed through the analysis fall within four main categories:

1

Attitudinal (including harmful social norms): Individual, familial, and community-held attitudes and beliefs, influenced by cultural and gendered norms that often don't see the value and importance of educating women, particularly those with disabilities, to find meaningful employment. Where it is accepted, women are expected to only enrol in courses that align with traditional gender stereotypical roles. TVET staff do not believe they have the capacity or resources to increase disability inclusion and accessibility. Individual women with disabilities, within this social context, often lack the confidence that they could successfully travel the pathway to eventual employment or livelihood opportunities.

2

Environmental: There were significant physical obstacles preventing access and opportunities for participation of women with disabilities within TVET institutes. These were not only inaccessible buildings and infrastructure but also transportation needs and distance for those in more remote areas.

3

Economic: There were many financial barriers for women with disabilities making enrolling in TVETs unaffordable, including fees, transportation and equipment needs. For some, there were additional economically related barriers such as childcare or other caring needs to be able attend courses.

4

Institutional: Within TVET institutes, it was found that attitudes, often based on gender and disability stereotypes, had discouraged the participation and inclusion of women with and without disabilities. There was also an absence of policies and staff training.

LWF-J/CLWR knew that to truly support women with disabilities to have more opportunities in the workplace, their response would need to comprise of interventions that addressed barriers in all areas. The goal was to increase equitable participation for women in TVET institutes by addressing economic, attitudinal/cultural, and institutional barriers. The approach they took was **multi-level** (aimed at individual, institutional, and



“To be honest, some of my colleagues thought it was not a good idea to try to get more women in TVET. We are from the Middle East and the culture doesn't accept that. If your daughter does car maintenance or carpentry, she will not be accepted. I tried to change the minds of my colleagues and to convince them it would be good for the college and for girls to be more involved in the economy and in the private sector.” (TVET staff member)

systemic levels) and **multi-stakeholder** (involving communities, individuals, institutions, the private sector, and government) as they sought to bring about change from all directions within the West Bank and Jerusalem.

Two years into the project, the team recognised that while progress had been made to increase the number of women successfully graduating from TVET courses, they had not seen as much progress for enrolments of women with disabilities.

They recognised that while it was essential to address barriers women with disabilities faced to afford enrolling in courses, or even know these courses were available, there were specific barriers within each of the TVETs that also needed to be addressed. These barriers and limitations were not always the same in each institute and the opportunities and possible remedies needed to be tailored to the unique circumstances of each institute. The way forward was to conduct gender and disability audits for each TVET institute participating in the program.

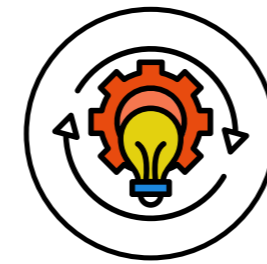
The team also recognised that one thing almost all of the TVET institutes involved in the project shared were common fears of what they thought disability inclusion would mean for them. To even begin to address these, there was a need for frank and open discussions so the team could work with them to allay these fears and concerns.



“I have been teaching here for 46 years, and this is the first year I have had women trainees. I find that women have a strong willingness to learn, more than men. I was surprised to find out how determined women were. They have patience and work for a long time on problems.”
(TVET staff member)

Common fears the GRIT team encountered from TVETs:

- 1 Disability inclusion is too difficult and complicated
- 2 It's too expensive to make all of these changes and additions – especially to buildings and workshop spaces
- 3 Women and women with disabilities won't be able to keep up with the men and will make the male students uncomfortable
- 4 We don't have the skills to work with people with disabilities – it requires specialisation
- 5 Because of all of this, we will mess this up and could even harm people further!



The Opportunity: How can TVET institutions be more gender and disability inclusive?

This meant the first step to address this dilemma was to design and implement a **gender and disability inclusion audit** of nine partner, non-governmental TVET institutes – the first of its kind for TVETs in the West Bank – to shed light on the current situation and guide the way forward for LWF-J and its TVET partners, which also included LWF vocational centres.

The audit also presented an opportunity to build closer relationships with TVETs and community-based organisations and partners to strategically strengthen not only the institutions that can support educational/skills building for women with disabilities but also address other barriers they face.

The audit aimed to assess the institutionalisation of gender equality and inclusion through an assessment of policies, systems, programmes, staffing, budgets, services, structures, and physical environments. The results and ensuing recommendations would inform the policy changes and support measures needed within each TVET institute to better meet the practical and strategic needs of women and women with disabilities.

However, the audit and resulting action plans for each TVET institution are only one piece of this multi-level series of interventions. Overall, the GRIT project has increased the participation of women with disabilities in TVET institutes through:

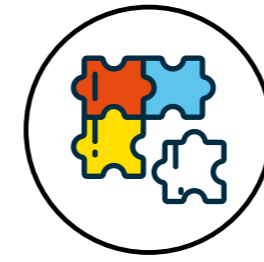
- Community-based outreach and awareness building
- Infrastructure improvements
- Individual supports for trainees
- Gender and inclusion training and capacity building
- Policy development within TVETs

Today, several years into the project, qualified women with and without disabilities, are finding work, and creating their own businesses, after receiving high quality skills training, workplace experience, and employment readiness support.

The remainder of this case study will explore the audit and other responses LWF-J and CLWR implemented and the lessons they learned along the way.



*“I want the institutions of vocational education to open their doors to all types of disabilities and be compatible and responsive to the needs of women with disabilities and the diversity of specializations and disabilities... If we believe that we are complementary as humans and not competitors, it’s not you or me but you AND me.”
(Ministry of Women Affairs staff member with visual impairment)*



The process

01. Addressing institutional barriers in TVETs through a gender and disability inclusion audit and analysis

What is a participatory gender and disability inclusion audit?

- 1 It is a diagnostic and analytical tool and process based on participatory methodology.
- 2 It considers whether internal practices and related support systems for gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion are effective and reinforce each other and whether they are being followed.
- 3 It does so by establishing a baseline, identifying critical gaps and challenges, recommending improvements and innovations, and documenting good practices.
- 4 The goal of a gender and disability inclusion audit is not only to support changes, but also to ensure the process is participatory across all levels of the organisation and provides organisational learning and development opportunities as well along the way.



The concept

As noted earlier, designing, and implementing a gender and disability inclusion audit was an opportunity to conduct specific analyses of each individual institute and develop recommendations tailored to the unique circumstances of that institute. This first step would act as a benchmark in the process of initiating institutional reform.

But the idea behind the audit wasn't simply to tailor a checklist; it was also intended, and designed, to be a participatory learning process for each institute. This meant working with the staff of each TVET institution to examine the gender and disability inclusion landscape (practices, policies, and culture) and to develop recommendations to improve it. This collaborative approach helped to diminish fears (particularly of costs, expertise, and complexity) and promote buy-in from each of the TVETs participating in the audit.

The goals

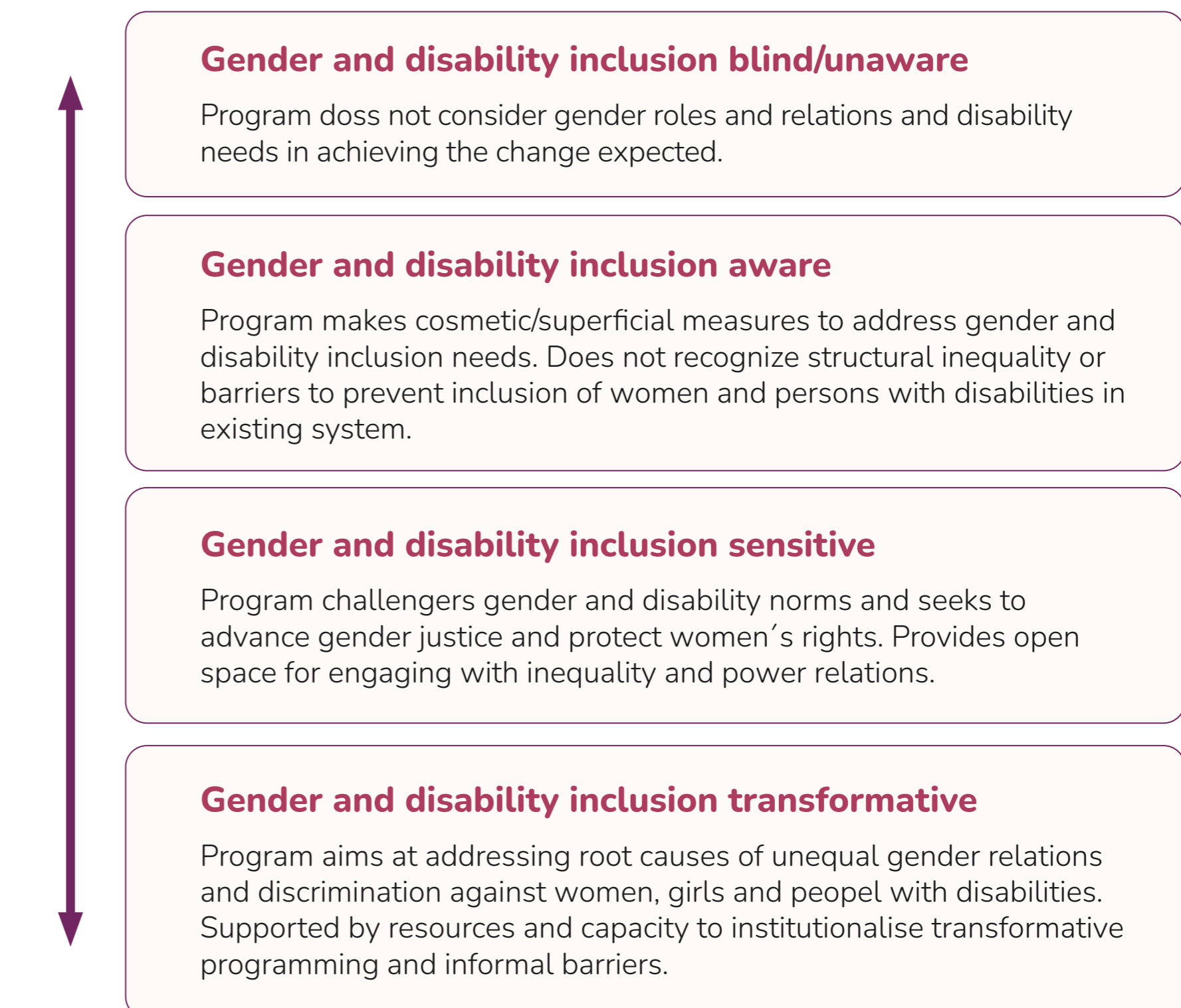
The overall goal of the audit was to strengthen policies and procedures within nine non-governmental TVET institutions to be more gender and disability inclusive through analysing internal and external processes, specifically:

- 1 The effectiveness of TVET institutions in responding to gender and disability inequality and discrimination in their local environments
- 2 The levels of awareness, commitment, and culture of staff, management, and governance bodies regarding equality and non-discrimination and how this is evidenced in practice
- 3 Identifying gaps that prevent or impede gender and disability inclusion
- 4 Identifying positive practices of gender and disability inclusion and ways to convert these into standard practice
- 5 Propose strategic ways to mainstream gender and disability inclusive practices and strengthen capacities

The analytical framework – aiming for transformative change

Before designing the audit's methodologies, it was necessary for the team to work with TVET institutes instead to decide how ambitious they wanted to be in terms of gender and disability inclusion. Adapting *Care International's Gender Marker*² to include disability, they were able to map a continuum, illustrated below.

Figure 1: Continuum of gender and disability inclusion



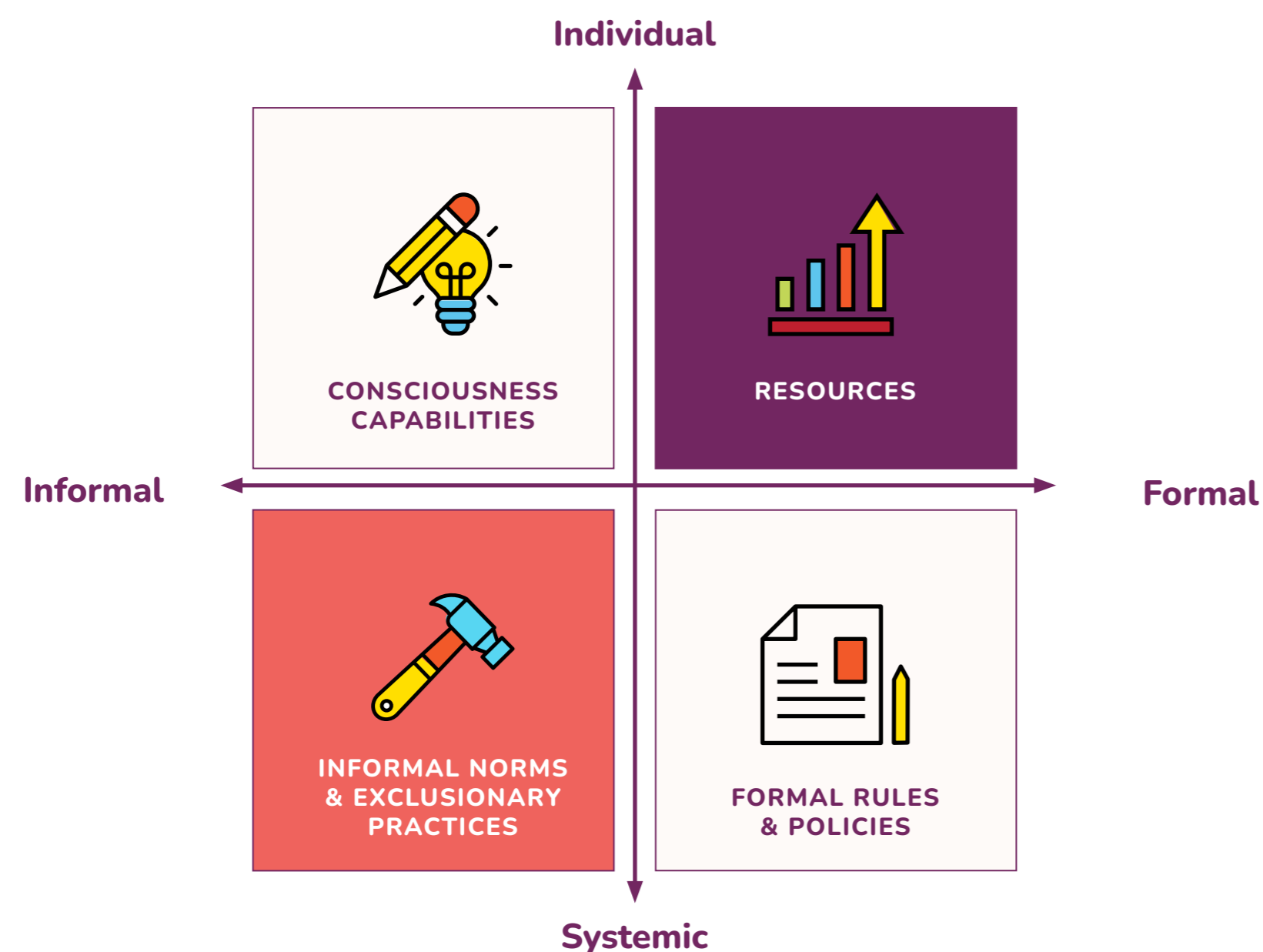
2. For more information on Care International's Gender Marker, see: <https://www.care.org/our-work/gender-equality/gender-expertise/gender-marker/>



Together with TVET institutes, they agreed the overall goal should be **transformative gender and disability inclusion** policies and practices, at all levels to ensure that women and people with disabilities find it easier to enrol in and fully participate in courses and find it easier to find employment after graduation.

The next step was to agree on an analytical framework to guide the design of the audit areas to be focussed on and methodologies to be used. For this, the team adopted the *Gender at Work Analytical Framework*³, which examines how **individual** and **systemic** change is possible at **formal** and **informal** levels, looking at four aspects.

 **Figure 2: Gender at Work Framework**



The top two quadrants relate to the individual. On the left are changes in individual awareness and capacity, at both the level of staff and students, including knowledge, skills, and a sense of personal agency. On the right are changes in physical and practical individual conditions, such as increased student supports and resources, etc.

The bottom two quadrants are related to the wider institutional context in which women with and without disabilities learn and train. The lower left quadrant relates to the institutional culture that impact on womens' experiences – the dominant social norms, practices, and opportunities for women within the institution. The lower right quadrant refers to the formal systems, policies, and structures that govern an institution.

A **transformative** approach requires that some work is done in each of the four quadrants and that they complement each other in positive and empowering ways. A transformative approach needs to address the root causes of gender and disability exclusion and shift power dynamics to achieve sustainable change.

Ultimately, this transforms the work of TVET institutes from merely providing training and education for specific vocations towards themselves becoming *agents of change* – positively influencing and impacting on the broader eco-system that tends to exclude women and women with disabilities from training and employment opportunities. Achieving these goals requires stronger engagement with the community and others committed to making changes in society that support gender and disability inclusion.

The design

The audit team reviewed different methodologies and approaches that could be used to conduct the gender and inclusion audits. However, they were unable to find relevant studies and tools that were suitable for the Palestinian TVET system or ones that incorporated disability inclusion.


Ultimately, the team used the *ILO's Participatory Gender Audit Marker*⁴ as inspiration, tailoring the indicators to the Palestinian and disability contexts.

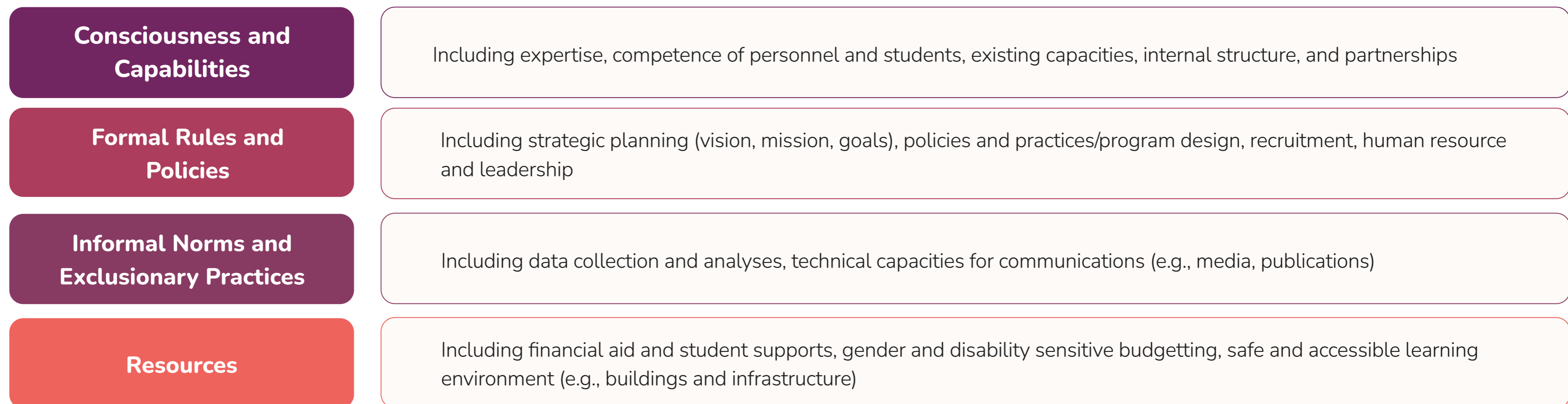
3. For more information about Gender At Work, see: <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>

4. For more information on ILO's Participatory Gender Audit, see: <https://www.itcilo.org/resources/ilo-participatory-gender-audit>



This resulted in four overall inquiry areas forming the basis for the audits (including recommendations) and the indicators designed in each area:

 **Figure 3: Four areas of inquiry for TVET audit**





To ensure the recommendations and innovations that emerged from the audit process would promote gender and disability inclusion practices that would ultimately contribute to bringing about **transformative change**, the audit examined the four aspects provided in the *Gender at Work* framework, within **each of the four areas of inquiry for the TVET audit**, to assess how transformative each TVET institution was in terms of gender and disability inclusion.

To get a deeper understanding of the indicators the GRIT team used to assess gender and disability inclusion, see **Annex A** below.

The final product

Implementing the audit recommendations and achieving the goal of transformative change in gender and disability inclusion requires buy-in and commitment at all levels of the organisation. This buy-in is encouraged by adopting a participatory methodology for the audit itself that doesn't seek to impose changes, but rather to bring students, staff, and senior management and leadership together in a journey towards greater gender and disability inclusion.

Therefore, the audit methodology and approach were designed in partnership with TVET institutes, and included these tools:

- 1 **Introductory meetings** with senior management to discuss the audit and elicit support and commitment
- 2 Short **staff trainings** to ensure they had basic knowledge about gender and disability inclusion, to dispel fears based on incorrect assumptions, and to ensure everyone was 'speaking the same language' – that is, that staff felt equipped with the terminology and knowledge of key concepts to participate fully in the audit and speak about their experiences.
- 3 Detailed **literature review** encompassing organisational strategies, policies, procedures, and budgets
- 4 Conducting **Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews** with both staff and students on organisational culture, capacities and knowledge/awareness, gender and disability indicators, and innovative ideas
- 5 Maintaining a **feedback loop** between the audit team and the TVET institute to ensure accuracy and buy-in on recommendations and ideas

The results

The results of the audit for the nine TVET institutions initially involved demonstrated that while some progress had been made towards these institutions becoming more "gender aware" or "gender sensitive", there was very little progress, if any, on them becoming more disability inclusive. Most staff believed their courses and facilities weren't suitable for women (or people) with disabilities, with almost no provisions made regarding curriculum, facilities, or staff capacity to work with people with disabilities to make studying at TVET institutions accessible for them.

This is a snapshot of some of the main findings:

Consciousness and Capabilities:

- The general culture of TVETs was male dominated with fewer women staff (especially at senior levels) and students
- Even fewer students with disabilities and almost no staff with disabilities; no people with disabilities in senior or leadership positions
- Very little knowledge/capacity amongst staff and students on gender and disability inclusion
- Perceived resistance to increasing disability inclusion due to costs associated with infrastructure changes needed

Formal Rules and Policies:

- Strategic plans not explicitly committing to gender and disability inclusion or using inclusive language
- Recruitment and HR policies did not prioritise hiring women or people with disabilities to make institutes more gender balanced and inclusive (e.g., no beneficial treatment during recruitment process or adverts encouraging women or people with disabilities to apply)
- Lack of gender equality policies (for example parental leave for male and female staff, differences in benefits)



- While codes of conduct existed, there was widespread lack of knowledge on policies and procedures
- Few had safeguarding, anti-bullying or anti-harassment policies and procedures

Informal Norms and Exclusionary Practices:

- Limited and inconsistent collection of demographic data such age, sex and disability status data in enrolment forms and other data collection processes (e.g., course evaluations, pre and post surveys, etc)
- Limited use of data for analysis, planning, or communication purposes
- Women tended to participate in “women specialities” (such as hairdressing, cooking, childcare, etc)
- No gender and disability-specific indicators used to measure gender and disability inclusion
- Communications developed were not gender or disability inclusive ie) few images of women and none of persons with disabilities in communications materials and the few images of women were all within expected gender roles
- There was no attempt to share stories of women or people with disabilities using vocational learning as pathways to employment

Resources:

- No gender and inclusion specific budgets to enable the allocation of resources
- Limited financial aid and/or educational supports available to students
- Very little gender and disability accessibility measures regarding buildings and infrastructure (including workshops and materials such as audio-visual information and announcements)

Recommendations – the action plans

Following the audit process, each TVET institute received their own tailored report with recommendations on specific ways they could be more gender and disability inclusive. The GRIT team then worked with each TVET institute to explore ways to turn these recommendations into concrete, time-bound action plans.

For those interested in designing your own version of an audit or seeking ideas for how to identify key disability inclusion actions for institutions and appropriate timeframes for prioritisation, a table providing common challenges and simple actions is included at the end of this case study (**Annex B**). This table can be adapted to guide analysis and support for any organisation seeking to be more gender and disability inclusive.

02. Addressing financial barriers to TVET through wrap around financial support for women and women with disabilities

Identifying the issues

A transformative approach to gender and disability requires us to not only look at institutional reform, but also to examine *all the other barriers* that women with disabilities face, preventing them from attending TVET institutes.

Here, the team had identified several significant financial or economic related barriers preventing women from contemplating enrolling in TVET courses (and in many cases families were reluctant or unwilling to make such a financial investment). These were costs related to tuition fees, course-related equipment and materials, transportation, and childcare needs while studying.

The financial (and other) barriers many women must face are not only related to enrolling in TVET courses; they know there are many more barriers awaiting them once they’ve graduated as they seek pathways to meaningful employment and careers. For many,



particularly women with disabilities facing additional challenges such as transportation, accessibility, and pervasive negative attitudes in the Palestinian labour market, self-employment is considered a promising pathway for income-generation. However, the costs associated with creating their own businesses (such as tools and equipment) can act as a deterrent, even to enrolment. Women seeking employment in traditionally male-dominated technical sectors also often face resistant attitudes as they try to break into these workplaces.

Identifying the solutions

To remove these barriers, the team have not created a one-size-fits-all financial support program, but instead a system where financial support is tailored to the specific needs of each woman eligible for support. TVET institutes and GRIT staff conduct interviews with each woman to understand her unique circumstances. Although time intensive, this process allows staff to understand these women more fully and to help ensure each woman is receiving the support she needs to succeed.

This support is seen as an essential enabler for participation in TVET courses, particularly for women with disabilities. The team have also discovered that providing financial support acts as an incentive and added argument for women needing to convince family members to agree to their enrolment.

- 1 For women seeking to enrol in TVET courses, there are several available financial support options, such as:
- 2 Partial or full **scholarships** to cover tuition fees, transportation, and other daily costs
- 3 **Tools and equipment** for women unable to afford the course requirements, including women with disabilities requiring modified equipment
- 4 **Funds** provided for eligible women to go towards **childcare and transportation** costs



The project's connection with women trainees does not end at graduation. For those who have already graduated, the program offers several options for additional support, depending on the needs of the specific graduate. These are evolving as the program continues. Options include:

1

Start-up support for women graduates to start their own businesses/ pursue self-employment. To support women to make the right choice for their needs, an entrepreneurial training is available and includes coaching to support women to develop feasibility/business plans required to apply for start-up support.

2

Internships have been identified as a crucial way to enhance employment prospects by providing additional workplace experience after graduation. Providing a financial subsidy for recently graduated women, particularly those with disabilities and those seeking entry points into new or “non-traditional” fields for women, provides them with the means to gain initial workplace experience that can serve as a steppingstone to other opportunities. It also exposes the private sector to the type of skills that women TVET graduates, including those with disabilities, can bring to their workplaces.

3

Vocation-specific “business incubators” at participating TVET institutes provides space, equipment, opportunities for collaboration, and technical support to graduates to further advance their skills and work towards starting their own businesses, including through collective innovation and entrepreneurship. There are currently incubators for sustainable agriculture, graphic design and printing, and carpentry.

By the end of 2024, more than 700 women will have received TVET scholarships. Over a hundred women have been able to access other supports available. For these women, it has made meaningful employment possible.



This is one of the most helpful strategies that we are actually getting from the program, because we know that many people in Palestine, and especially women, want to get trained. They want to have new opportunities of working. But of course, often they cannot afford to pay for it. As a woman in a family, she is the mother, and she has children, or even if she is not married, always the men in the family are prioritised for education. So, scholarships for women are actually one of the best strategies that we included in the GRIT program.... Without this I think the program would be much weaker...Most of the women that we are now working with through the GRIT program come to us from villages and they need at least two transports to reach to us. So, without support scholarships and transportation, I think this would be very, very difficult. (TVET Focal Point)



03.

Addressing cultural and individual attitudinal barriers and lack of awareness through community outreach activities

Identifying the issues

Previous evaluations and the gender analysis discussed previously had provided the team with information on the attitudinal barriers that existed preventing women with and without disabilities, from considering attending a TVET institute. These were attitudes held individually, within the family, within the community, and within the broader Palestinian society.

For women with disabilities facing significant obstacles to seeking meaningful employment, including within their families, it's not surprising that evaluations found another obstacle: there was also a lack of self-confidence amongst some women who didn't believe they were capable of successfully graduating and gaining employment.

Identifying the solutions

To start to shift these attitudinal barriers, LWF-J and CLWR collaborated with community-based organisations (CBOs), Organisations for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), and women TVET graduates to create a "Local Messengers" program.

Previous experiences in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have taught LWF-J and CLWR that challenging harmful myths and stereotypes within communities (particularly concerning gender and disability) is done more successfully through trusted local messengers. These respected members of their community can communicate in culturally appropriate ways and provide non-threatening and trusted spaces for holding these difficult conversations.

There are three types of Local Messengers: TVET Ambassadors, community-based guidance counsellors, and "cultural translators". Together, these key "social change agents" have been fundamental to the success of this approach.

TVET Ambassadors

These are women who speak at community events and to individual women about their experiences attending TVET courses and finding meaningful employment afterwards. Their aim is to both inspire and inform the community about pathways available to women seeking to learn a vocation.

The TVET Ambassadors participate in a one-day training that aims to support them to build confidence in their skills and abilities to communicate messages within the community accurately and persuasively. These women then volunteer their time (related costs are covered by LWF) to try to reach out to as many women and their families as possible to encourage them to apply and provide advice on the support available to them if they need it.

The impact of hearing directly from women who have successfully completed a TVET course and are now meaningfully employed or running their own businesses cannot be understated. These stories (whether shared by TVET Ambassadors themselves or through social media and websites) demonstrate the possibilities available to women and help to inspire and give them the confidence to explore these possibilities. They also present opportunities for families and communities to widen their conceptions of what is possible and acceptable in a modern Palestinian society.



*"In some families there is some shame about having family members with disabilities in public and they keep them at home. They cannot participate in education or work in public spaces. They have no social relations, it's like a jail."
(GRIT Local Messenger)*



GRIT ثابري | Why should I enroll in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)?

Careers are waiting!
Over 50% of private sector firms prefer to employ TVET graduates.

It's inclusive
Women and people with disabilities have the right to train and work in all professions and fields.

It's practical
TVET provides **hands-on learning** so you can develop practical, market-relevant skills and learn from industry experts.

It's convenient
TVET offers a **flexible training format** to work with your schedule, making it easy to attend, even if you're juggling many responsibilities.

It has a high employment rate
92% of Palestinian vocational graduates are employed after graduation.

It has LOTS of options
Graduates can pursue both **employment and self-employment opportunities** with their skills.

It's affordable
Scholarships and financial support are available to help cover things like tuition fees, transportation and other expenses.

It's always evolving
Advancements in technology have reduced physical requirements, making it easier for women and people with disabilities to participate.

Want to learn more? Visit www.tvet.ps

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Figure 4: Promotional poster used in community events

Community-based guidance counsellors

These are people who work for local community organisations, often women's organisations, who receive training and messaging support from the project about local TVET opportunities available to women and women with disabilities. These guidance counsellors can provide support for women to decide if vocational education is the right pathway for them and if so, to make recommendations on courses and referrals to TVET institutes and project staff as needed.

Cultural translators

These are influential post-secondary, community, and religious leaders within the community. As locally known and trusted individuals, cultural translators are identified and supported to engage with their communities by using existing networks to reach women, particularly marginalised and vulnerable women, and their families and communities.

Promotional materials and social media

In addition to local messengers, it was also necessary to consider other ways to reach women and their families and communities to show them the vocational and technical pathways to employment and the possibilities this could present for them. The team therefore have also focussed on developing gender and disability inclusive promotional materials and organising various public outreach events.

They have done this by working with TVET institutes to make language used on websites and in social media more inclusive, as well as increasing the focus on sharing stories of women successfully obtaining TVET accreditations and gaining employment.

Public outreach and networking activities

The team partners with local organisations to organise public outreach activities aimed at increasing the community's awareness of vocational and technical educational pathways for income-generation, particularly for women and women with disabilities. These are opportunities to not only share success stories and examples, but also to have conversations with communities about what women and women with disabilities can achieve, if given the chance.

Here are some examples and descriptions of activities:

1

“Discover TVET” events: These are community events to introduce TVETs and opportunities available for women. Speeches from ambassadors and other guests, interactive exhibits demonstrating different specialties offered by institutes in each region, and conversations with graduates and trainees provide an indirect and non-threatening space for having conversations with families in contexts where some family members need convincing.

2

Talking at schools and other educational settings: Aims to introduce older secondary school students to the benefits and employment opportunities available to girls and women, including non-traditional courses for women in the trades sector.

3

Open house events: Public events hosted at TVET institutes, these are attended by women and their families where institutes showcase their vocational programs and provide tours of their facilities. This introduces women to their learning environment, helping them become more familiar and comfortable. It can also help to engage male family members who may be less supportive of women attending TVETs.

4

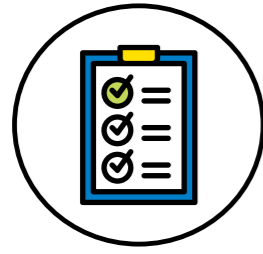
Vocational camps: These are multi-day camps held at partner institutes, where participants are exposed to existing professions, participate in group activities, and are supported to identify their professional inclination. Through conducting practical workshops, camps provide opportunities for women to gain hands-on experiences and learning by participating in vocational activities, including trying out non-traditional and male-dominated activities. Sessions on career guidance, gender and inclusion, and vocational entrepreneurship sessions are also provided.

As of the end of 2023, 171 local messengers (131W/40M) have been trained and engaged in the project, including 62 TVET Ambassadors (53W/9M). There have been almost 200 outreach events conducted, reaching thousands of people.



Before GRIT, in one village there was the attitude that women belong in the home. After a GRIT outreach event, there were many questions and I talked with many women. I suggested that a woman could attend one or two short courses and see how it went and how it would affect their family. After that, two women enrolled. One woman learned to make pastries, and now has her own small business, and her husband supports her to deliver the goods. (Local Messenger, Nablus)





Impacts and Outcomes

The GRIT project, due to conclude in 2025, has made substantial progress on increasing enrolment of women with disabilities in TVET institutes. As of early 2024, there has been a triple increase in the numbers of women with disabilities enrolling. Evaluations conducted by LWF-J/CLWR demonstrated the transformational change being experienced by women, including women with disabilities, involved in the GRIT project. Today, almost half of all women with disabilities are applying to male-dominated vocational courses (such as carpentry and sustainable agriculture), challenging social and cultural norms and expectations and surprising their teachers and classmates along the way.

Evaluations have shown that the provision of assistive devices and tools have helped support women with disabilities to participate equitably in courses. Most of all, they have simply needed the opportunity and space to try new things. Women with disabilities overwhelming reported in surveys that they felt (to some degree) that their TVET institute was providing needed support to allow them to participate equitably in courses, alongside their peers.

This is a summary of the other key impacts the team have identified:

1

Partnerships with CBOs and OPDs: Prior to the commencement of the GRIT project, there were no formal partnerships with local OPDs. Today, OPDs work closely with the project not only to amplify the reach of community engagement, but also to refer people with disabilities to the project if they're interested in vocational and technical learning. Relationships now built between CBOs, OPDs, Local Messengers, and TVETs adds to the sustainability of this support after the project ends.

2

Gender and disability inclusion policies: Before the audit, none of the TVET institutes had gender and inclusion policies. Today, more than half have adopted new policies and it's expected that all will have done so before the close of the project.

3

Infrastructure and accessibility improvements: More than half of TVET institutes involved in the audit have implemented changes to create accessible and safe spaces that respond to the specific needs of women with disabilities. The remaining institutes will have completed their changes by the end of the project.

4

Staff/student capacity building: Supported by the project, TVETs now provide regular gender and disability inclusion training for staff. Training of Trainers (ToTs) provided for guidance counsellors allows them to continue building capacity within their TVET institute. Staff also provide ongoing support to institutionalise gender and disability inclusion goals through their action plans and policies.

5

Data collection: Before the audit, TVETs did not collect useful data on people with disabilities. Now, enrolment and intake processes are being designed to create a fuller picture. This includes administering the Washington Group Questions⁵ in their procedures to identify women with disabilities and their specific needs. In addition, other evaluation tools used by TVET institutes (e.g., course evaluations) have been revised to capture gender and disability data. Lastly, new tools have been developed by the team over the course of the project. These are discussed further in the "Lessons Learned" section below.

6

Financial support mechanisms: By providing wrap around financial supports for women with disabilities to attend TVET courses, the team found that not only did this address a real economic need, but it also addressed family resistance to enrolment on the basis of not having the funds needed.

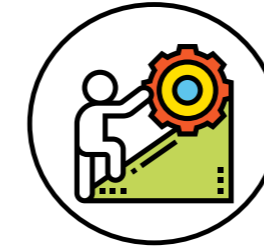
5. The Washington Group Question Sets are increasingly and widely used tools to generate comparable data about persons with disabilities. For more information on how they can be used in humanitarian contexts, see Humanity & Inclusion/Handicap International's "Disability Data in Humanitarian Action" at: <https://www.humanity-inclusion.org.uk/en/projects/disability-data-in-humanitarian-action>



“At the beginning of my enrolment, I was scared for the first week. I was afraid that I would not be able to perform tasks and skills at my peer level. But with time it became clear to me that this thing is not true. My feelings about learning have changed a lot, even my disability has improved from before...I can feel that the interaction with new people has improved my ability to express myself.” – GEI focus group participant



“Previously, I felt lost, and my mental health suffered. However, after enrolling in TVET, my personality went through a noticeable change, as observed by everyone, including my husband. The support from my parents and husband played a significant role. Today, I run my own successful dessert business, and the high demand for my desserts impresses those who once doubted me.” – GEI focus group participant



Where to from here? Next steps

While the number of women with disabilities enrolling in TVET institutes has increased each year over the last four years, women with disabilities still represent a very small percentage of the student body – today there are 35 women students with a disability enrolled in TVET courses, compared to only 7 when the project began; to date the GRIT project has supported 64 women with disabilities to complete their training. This demonstrates the importance of continuing to devote specific resources and efforts into the many aspects of disability inclusion in vocational learning and beyond.

Here are some of the ways the GRIT team is continuing to expand this work:

1

Increasing community outreach (in partnership with TVETs): Recognising that the majority of women learned of the availability of courses through GRIT activities, TVETs are now more engaged in outreach, building relationships with community organisations and leaders.

2

Increasing individualised support needed for women with disabilities to be successful on the TVET pathway to income-generation.

3

Supporting entrepreneurial pathways: Anticipating the continuing economic decline due to the ongoing war, the GRIT project is further developing post-graduate supports, particularly business start-up support and entrepreneurial skills development for women with and without disabilities, to ensure they do not become discouraged and disengaged. This includes engaging more women in internship placements, engaging graduates in short courses to upgrade and/or develop new relevant skills, and providing employment guidance through mentors.

4

Increasing the reach of technical and vocational learning to rural/ remote areas: Including through the development of online and outreach course like those delivered through the Mobile Vocational Training Centre – which is van equipped with tools, equipment, and technical staff who travel to remote and marginalised communities to deliver short courses.

5

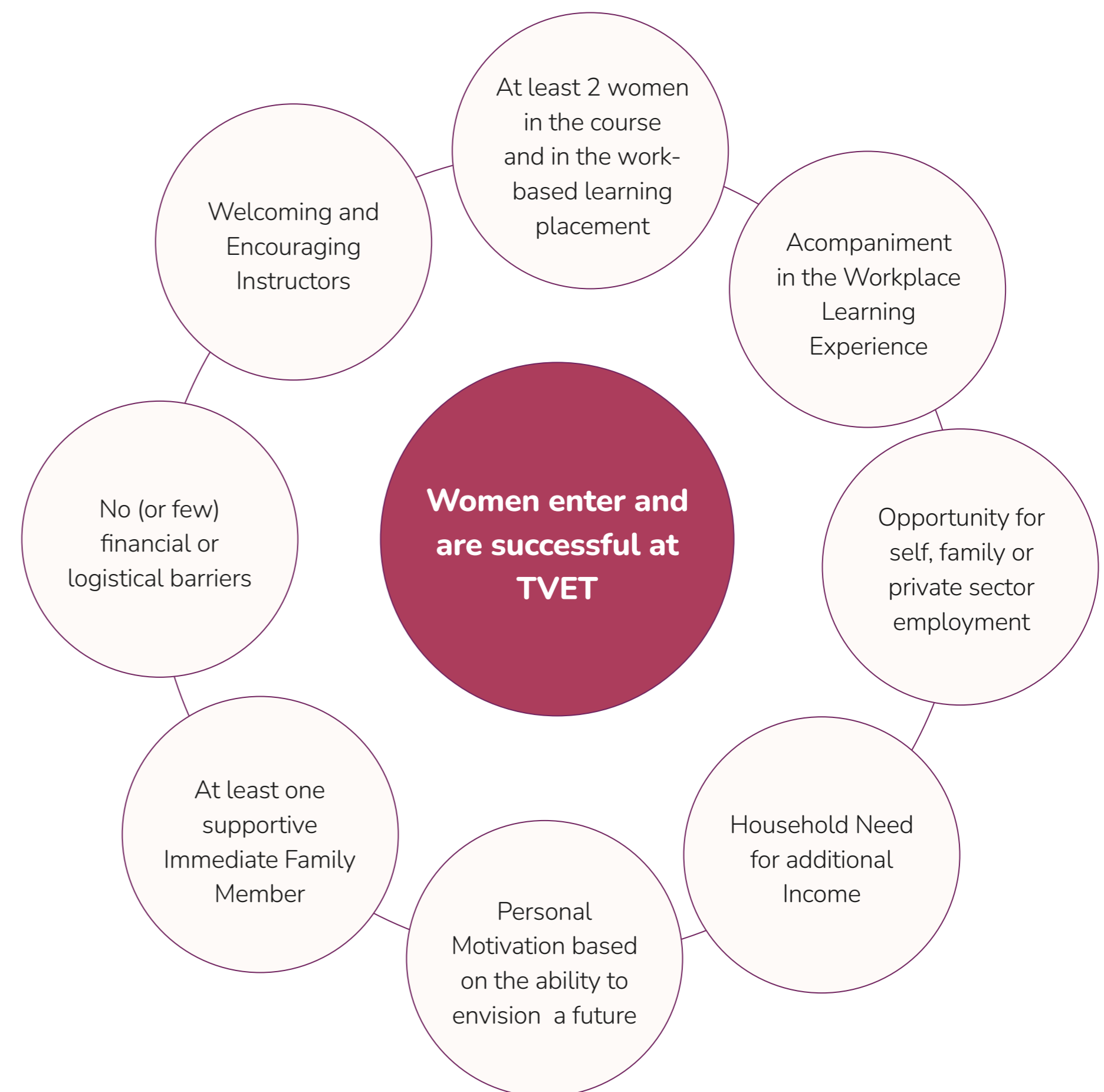
Adapting to increased safety concerns by supporting opportunities for online engagement where possible, including with additional equipment.



What can we learn about disability inclusion in humanitarian contexts from this story? (Lessons Learned & Key Take Aways for Practitioners)

This image demonstrates the aspects of the GRITS program that LWF-J and CLWR have identified as crucial for women to enrol and successfully graduate from TVET institutes. This section will elaborate on a few of them specifically relevant for women with disabilities.

Figure 5: Contributing Elements to Increase Women in TVET





Encouraging self-confidence through role models

Transformative change requires belief that it's possible. For many women with disabilities, it can feel almost impossible to imagine, let alone dream, of a life where they're able to work in jobs they find meaningful. The barriers are significant – poverty, lack of educational opportunities, families who don't support their goals; for some women, it isn't until they graduate that they encounter discrimination from a workforce that doesn't see them as capable. Where can they find hope in a labour market that closes the door on them?

The GRIT project knew they needed to work with their partners and stakeholders to share stories of other women and women with disabilities who had realised their dreams and changed their lives by completing TVET courses and finding meaningful employment. They needed women with disabilities and their families and communities throughout the West Bank and Jerusalem to know it was possible and that there was support available to help them with their unique needs.

Whether through TVET Ambassadors, other community messengers, or social media messaging, the project has shown women with and without disabilities that their dreams do not have to remain dreams. This personal motivation has been identified as a powerful element in them not only enrolling, but also completing their vocational training. The GRIT team has learned that personal motivation grows when women can be inspired by listening to stories from other women who have faced and overcome similar challenges on their vocational pathway and arrived at a destination of their own choosing, changing their lives in the process. For women hoping to enrol in male-dominated courses (such as carpentry or mechanics), modelling and showcasing women's success stories is even more crucial, and effective in bringing about transformative change.

Participation and empowerment

Participation of people with disabilities in humanitarian action is obviously essential to disability inclusion measures. At its most basic, it means people with disabilities have a right to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. This requires humanitarian actors to consult and involve people with disabilities in our programs and decisions.

What this means in any given context is subject to interpretation. Often seen as a ladder or a spectrum of engagement, this can range from consultation to collaboration





to codesign. At the highest level, participation can empower people with disabilities to make these decisions and for us as humanitarians to simply implement their wishes.

One of the struggles many humanitarians face when seeking to be more disability inclusive is how to reach out to people who may be “hidden” by their families and communities. Where OPDs exist, this is one way to start to build relationships with people with disabilities in our operating context. During the audit process, the project team were seeking women with disabilities who were participating in or had graduated from TVET institutions. There were only a handful. This added another layer of challenges to supporting meaningful participation. The team believes that if they could do this project over, they would have done even more to bring more women with disabilities into the project earlier on to help guide the development of the audit tools and other wraparound supports. However today, with a much larger cohort of current and former women students with disabilities, they have established an Advisory Committee who support and advise TVET institutes on their progress towards the disability inclusion goals each has set. Combined with a stronger relationship with OPDs – who have now developed their own relationships directly with TVET institutes – the project has shown that meaningful participation of people with disabilities is not a static concept but an evolving one, where humanitarian organisations should constantly strive to empower people with disabilities and relinquish some control of our projects.

Intersectional inclusion

As this story shows, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination can compound the effects and make change through inclusion more difficult to achieve. For these Palestinian women, it takes enormous courage and persistence to challenge both gender and disability stereotypes that would otherwise confine their hopes and aspirations.

By adopting an intersectional approach to disability inclusion, the GRIT project designed assessment and analysis tools to measure the impacts of not only gender and disability, but also other factors (such as age, type of disability, and geographic location) and how they interrelate for these women in creating barriers to pursuing vocational learning and career opportunities.

The project also took an individualised approach to wraparound supports, ensuring the totality of each woman was considered in helping them craft a pathway to achieving their goals. Although this is more time consuming (and therefore requires more resources), it is seen as essential to ensuring women with disabilities have the various supports they need to complete their studies and find suitable work.





Transforming “opponents” into “allies” through changing minds, particularly men

The impacts of sharing women’s success stories in vocational learning and career building aren’t only felt by women. The project has learned that it can have a powerful effect on persuading family members (often men) of the possibilities, particularly financial, for women.

They also learned that involving other male allies (community leaders, family members of women graduates, teaching staff and other students) made a substantial impact on changing minds. Hearing from other men whose wives, sisters, daughters, mothers were now successfully earning a living doing work they enjoyed has shifted opinions much more successfully than more traditional rights-based messaging. This is especially the case for women with disabilities, where research showed that having a family member supporting them was essential to them successfully completing their course. As a result, working more closely with male allies to share their stories with other men in communities has become a key component of the GRIT project.

Change can provoke fear – capacity building should be experiential to address those fears

It’s not only family who may need some convincing when it comes to disability inclusion. Many of the staff at TVET institutes, while convinced of the merits of disability inclusion, nevertheless had major doubts wholesale change would be possible. Doubts about the perceived complexity and enormity of the task, the resources required, the capacity of women to participate, and of the staff capacity to teach them were in abundance. **“And so, it began”**, as one TVET Director put it, **“with a visit.”** A group of young adults with intellectual disabilities arrived at a TVET Institute to learn about growing food. One visit became another, and then another.

And while teaching staff learned theoretical concepts about disability inclusion through training, it was interacting with people with diverse disabilities in their own classrooms, workshops, studios, and gardens that taught them the most. It gave them confidence in

their own abilities to support women and men with disabilities to participate in vocational training. They also learned how rewarding this work could be.

For us, as humanitarian practitioners, this provides support for having a broader and more experiential approach to building capacity, beyond the training rooms. On-the-job and peer support approaches will have a greater impact on building confidence and changing beliefs and behaviour towards greater disability inclusion.

Data-based decision-making

As the IASC Guidelines note, quality humanitarian programming is built on an understanding of the requirements and priorities of persons with disabilities during a crisis⁶. This is not only essential in the design phase of a project, but also throughout the life of the project – this ensures there is ongoing monitoring and the development of an evidence base to inform the decisions that are made throughout any given project.

The GRIT project, now in its fifth year (as at early 2024), has had to contend with changing circumstances outside the project that have nevertheless impacted on it – the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing conflict and violence, to name two. This has meant the team has been highly attentive to making sure decisions were informed by current data, and not on ongoing assumptions. This includes a suite of quantitative data tools such as surveys (for trainees, graduates, private sector employers and TVET institutes), pre and post surveys and activity evaluations that feed into project implementation in real-time and allows the GRIT team to make informed programming decisions based on project evidence.

In addition to quantitative data collection, the GRIT team developed the **Gender Empowerment Index**, a mixed method tool and process to allow the team to regularly understand the changing picture and needs for women with and without disabilities, gather reflections and feedback, and then use this data to identify what changes they need to make. The tool examines four areas: self-efficacy; personal autonomy and decision-making; perspectives on gender relations and power; and financial independence.

6. For more information on the IASC Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, see the Resources section at the end of this case study.



Supporting and enhancing disability inclusion measures requires, in addition to broader socio-economic support, a context-specific understanding of the barriers and challenges to inclusion within a specific organisation or institution. This means that addressing, for example, economic/financial barriers for women with and without disabilities and promoting vocational pathways to employment within communities (i.e., spreading the word) will not always be enough. We need to analyse individual institutes or organisations or facilities to see where the issues lie and how they can be addressed to be more disability inclusive. The solutions must be tailored to the realities of each specific institution. The most effective and efficient way to do this is through a disability-related audit. While there are currently few examples or templates humanitarian organisations can use to adapt to their needs, it is hoped this case study and support materials can be an important step to addressing this gap. We hope this case study will inspire humanitarians to define what disability inclusion means, concretely and measurably, for specific organisations. Doing so will help ensure actions taken to improve disability inclusion are not only having a measurable effect; they're also having a transformative impact on the lives of people with disabilities.



“Hearing from women themselves has been so important to the project. The GEI gives women the space to provide reflections or thoughts on things that we might not be asking in our quantitative data surveys.” (CLWR/GRIT project staff)



Questions for you to reflect upon in your own disability inclusion activities:

- 1 How well do you understand the **specific barriers** people with disabilities face in your context? Have you conducted an audit or analysis using indicators and methods tailored to people with disabilities?
- 2 How disability inclusive are the institutes or organisations involved? Do you know what their **goals** are?
- 3 Have you defined the **indicators** by which you can measure disability inclusion?
- 4 How **participatory** can you make your project's design and implementation for people with disabilities? Can you devote more time and resources to enhancing their levels of participation right from the beginning?
- 5 Are you working with **community-based organisations and OPDs** as closely as you can? Can they be partners in the process? Are you supporting them to continue the work of disability inclusion long after the project has ended?
- 6 Are you **building capacity** beyond the theoretical and into the experiential? Are you supporting people involved in the project to feel confident of their abilities to work appropriately with people with disabilities?
- 7 Can you think strategically about **shifting people's attitudes** towards greater disability inclusion and acceptance? Can you focus less on the message and more on the most compelling messenger?



Abbreviations

CBO: Community-Based Organisation

CLWR: Canadian Lutheran World Relief

GRIT: Gender-Responsive and Inclusive (technical and vocational education and) Training Program

LWF-J: Lutheran World Federation - Jerusalem

MENA: Middle East North Africa

OPD/DPO: Organisations of Persons with Disabilities;
Disabled Persons Organisations

TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training



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Annex A: Excerpt of Gender & Inclusion Audit Indicators

Consciousness and Capabilities:

% and # of staff and students) who report a high level of awareness on gender and inclusion issues

% and # of staff and leadership that rank gender and inclusion as “important” or “very important” on a 5-point Likert scale

% and # of students and staff who participated in training, awareness-raising, or activities related to gender and inclusion in the past year

Resources:

% and # of women with disabilities who agree or strongly agree that their TVET institute has the necessary supports in place for them to participate equitably with their peers

% and # women and people with disabilities who received scholarships or other forms of financial support in the last scholastic year

Informal Norms & Practices:

% and # of women and people with disabilities who reported feeling safe in their work-based learning placement

% and # of staff and students who report feeling free to express their opinions regarding gender and inclusion

% and # of women and people with disabilities who report they do not feel stigmatized or belittled

% and # of women and people with disabilities currently employed as instructors, staff, and leaders within the TVET institute

Formal Rules and Policies:

of relevant policies that promote gender equality and disability inclusion (including safeguarding, anti-bullying, and anti-harassment policies)

Are gender and disability inclusion priorities included in the current strategic plan? (yes/no)

Is a complaints management system in place that can safely address issues related to gender and disability? (yes/no)

Annex B: Challenges, actions and timeframes for gender and disability inclusion in vocational training institutes

Number	Main challenge	Recommended actions	Proposed timeframe
Consciousness and Capabilities			
1	Limited level of gender and disability inclusion awareness amongst staff and students	<p>Provide awareness-raising and capacity building opportunities on gender and disability inclusion for staff and students</p> <p>Seek out partnerships/build a network with like-minded institutions/organisations to exchange knowledge about gender and disability inclusion best practices, actions, and initiatives</p>	Annually
2	Lack of accountability to follow up and implement initiatives on gender and disability inclusion	Appoint an existing staff member as a gender focal point and provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to be responsible for following up, and taking initiative, on identified actions	Immediately/ as soon as possible
Formal Rules and Policies			
3	Gender and inclusion are not included in strategic planning and programming decisions	Conduct an inclusive context analysis before strategic planning processes and/or before introducing any new program/community activity	<p>Every strategic planning cycle</p> <p>Prior to the introduction of new courses/ programming</p>



4	Limited number of women and persons with disabilities in the staff, senior management, students	<p>Make employment policies more gender and inclusion sensitive by ensuring that there is at least one woman and/or persons with disabilities on the panel and that job announcements are gender and inclusion sensitive, (e.g., explicitly encouraging women and persons with disabilities to apply)</p> <p>Increase the representation of women and persons with disabilities on boards and in senior management by setting appropriate targets and identifying (and removing) barriers/obstacles for them.</p>	Immediately/as soon as possible
5	There is a denial about the existence of any safeguarding or protection issues within the institution/ organisation	<p>Adopt a policy and deliver annual training on safeguarding, anti-harassment, and anti-bullying policies.</p> <p>Establish a complaints response mechanism and ensure staff and students are trained in what it is and how to use it.</p>	Within six months
Informal Norms and Exclusionary Practices			
6	Language and images used in publications and social media are not always gender and disability sensitive	Adopt gender and disability inclusive communication guidelines to demonstrate the way the institution/organisation seeks to be an “agent of change”	Within three months
7	There is a culture of sharing good practices of gender and inclusion via word of mouth, rather than documentation	Make a plan to start documenting these practices in accessible formats and sharing them more widely within the institution and beyond	Within one year
8	Data on disability status is not routinely or consistently collected during enrolment or used to inform programmatic decisions	Collect and analyze sex, age and ability disaggregated data during enrolment, strategic planning and during design of new programs	Immediately/as soon as possible
Resources			
9	Lack of planning and design of transparent gender responsive and inclusive budgets	<p>Link budgets to strategic planning, gradually moving from itemized budgets to programmatic budgets</p> <p>Link budget planning with gender and disability inclusion indicators</p>	When possible
10	Buildings are not accessible or suitable for persons with disabilities or women with children	Start by making the most needed changes (eg, toilets for PWD, ramps, elevators, audio-visual signs)	As soon as funding and financial resources available



Further resources

Canadian Lutheran World Relief, The GRIT Project, <https://www.clwr.org/grit-info>

Care International, Gender Marker, <https://www.care.org/our-work/gender-equality/gender-expertise/gender-marker/>

Gender at Work, Gender at Work Framework, <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>

Humanity & Inclusion UK, Disability Data in Humanitarian Action, <https://www.humanity-inclusion.org.uk/en/projects/disability-data-in-humanitarian-action>

Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2019, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-guidelines-on-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-humanitarian-action-2019>, specifically:

- **Chapter 3:** What to do – Key Approaches to Programming ('Must-Do Actions')
- **Chapter 6:** Cross-cutting considerations
- **Chapter 12:** Education
- **Chapter 14:** Livelihoods

International Disability Alliance, Intersectionalities, <https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/intersectionalities>

International Labour Organization, International Training Centre, the ILO Participatory Gender Audit, <https://www.itcilo.org/resources/ilo-participatory-gender-audit>

International Labour Organization, A manual for gender audit facilitators: The ILO participatory gender audit methodology (2nd Ed), https://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/WCMS_187411/lang--en/index.htm

Lutheran World Federation, Jerusalem Country Program, <https://lutheranworld.org/what-we-do/humanitarian-and-development-work/where-we-work/jerusalem>

UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, A/RES/61/106, 24 January 2007, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/2007/en/49751>

Washington Group on Disability Statistics, Question Sets, <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/>