



Report

Improving Access to protection, education and health services for children with disabilities

Final Review Report – brief version

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//edited by SCN**

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Introduction

This project review has been commissioned by Save the Children Norway (SCN) to document the cross thematic model (mainly child protection and education), document results and gather lessons learnt.

The specific objectives of the review are to:

1. Capture the core components of the project, especially how the project works across sectors and tools being used
2. Document the results of the project, lessons learnt, main challenges and the factors determining success
3. Assess and document the work related to partnership and **children's participation**
4. Assess the sustainability of the project and give advice on replicability of the project components for other countries to consider

The key stakeholders of this review are SCN, Save the Children Ethiopia (SCEth), University of Gondar staff (UoG), key project staff, such as the CBR¹ Director, CBR Coordinator, Field Supervisor and Field worker, local Ethiopian government offices (Kebele and Woreda level) and communities, parents/ caregivers and children. SCN and SCEth will use the review internally to inform its approach to ensure Inclusion and Equality **and the review's** findings may be used to influence the approaches of key external stakeholders such as SCI at a global level, and Norad.

Methodology

The project review employed a cross sectional descriptive study design that employs a mixed method approach using mainly qualitative but some secondary quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. The population of the project review was the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project; parents, caregivers, vulnerable children, especially children with disabilities and project stakeholders including teachers, service providers in government and non-government organizations, relevant sector offices at zonal, woreda and kebele level as well as implementing partners including the University of Gondar and Birhane Lehitsanat (the former Handicap National). Different participatory methods including Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) **and child led participatory methods such as impact drawings, 'H' assessment and body mapping** exercises were carried out to collect information pertinent to the review objectives.



¹ CBR stands for Community Based Rehabilitation which defined in 2004¹ by the International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Health Organization (WHO) as “a strategy within general community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities, poverty reduction and social inclusion of all people with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of people with disabilities themselves, their families, organizations and communities, and the relevant governmental and non-governmental health, education, vocational, social and other services.

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Context

The Save the Children International global strategy 2016-2018 places a strong focus on the children who have been left behind by recent social and economic gains. To reach these children, Save the Children has committed to consciously and deliberately putting the most deprived and marginalized children first in our own work and advocate for others to do the same. In line with this, disability is one of the three cross cutting issues in the global strategy. As one of the 30 national members of Save the Children, Save the Children Norway (SCN) has highlighted the inclusion of marginalized children, including children with disabilities in its current strategy (2014-2018).

Project Overview

The goal of this project is to improve the living standards of children and youth with disabilities living in North Gondar zone ensuring their access to basic services and opportunities to enable them to become active contributors and participants in their communities.

Save the Children has worked in partnership with the University of Gondar since 2005 to identify and protect vulnerable children, especially children with disabilities. The project entitled “**Access to Protection, Education and Health for Children with Disabilities and other Vulnerable Children in North Gondar Zone, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia**” (hereafter called CBR project) has worked with communities, teachers and government service providers to improve the lives of children with disabilities and other children without appropriate care. It has been implemented in nine geographical areas (9 Kebeles) in Lay Armachiho with a resource center at the University of Gondar. There has also been a program in Chilga woreda (phased out in 2014) implemented in partnership with Handicap National (new name Birhane Lehitsanat).

Specific objectives are:

- To improve the health condition of children with disabilities and children without appropriate care
- To improve social integration and participation of children with disabilities and children without appropriate care
- To improve the level of awareness regarding child wellbeing issues in community groups and other concerned stakeholders
- To reduce the prevalence of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children
- To improve the involvement of government regarding child wellbeing issues for children with disabilities and children without appropriate care

Findings

Relevance

The review finds that the CBR project is highly relevant in meeting the existing needs of the target beneficiaries including children with disabilities, their parents and caregivers as well as other children without appropriate care in the target community. The project is particularly relevant in transforming the discriminatory attitudes and practices of communities towards children with disabilities and improving their access to basic services such as health, education and social protection and empowerment. It has also improved childrens' **and parents/caregivers'** confidence to demand their right to services and protection of their rights. Children taking part in participatory exercises highlighted improved psychosocial well being (happiness), better access to information and education opportunities, improved mobility and improved socioeconomic life in the family among the main improvements in their life.

Project Components and cross thematic model

The CBR project has managed to integrate components of the CBR model which are health, education, livelihood and social protection and empowerment and link them together to provide adequate support to children with disabilities and their families. Furthermore, both individual support and mainstreaming (systemic change) interventions were implemented by the project to ensure that children with disabilities, their parents/ caregivers

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and other vulnerable children have access to holistic and integrated services and opportunities to enable them to become active contributors and participants in their communities. For example in education, children with disabilities have received educational material and support and at the same time systemic initiatives have been put in place in cooperation with the woreda education authorities to address barriers to education.

In terms of how the different project components (health, education, social protection and livelihood) interact and generate feasible dynamics, the review found that there is a significant synergy between the awareness related project interventions on the one hand and the support package on the other, being access to health services, education, protection and social empowerment for the individual children with their families. Through cross sectoral communication and referral, the various needs of the child are assessed and addressed.

Intersectoral Linkage and system strengthening

The projects effort to ensure intersectoral linkage, synergy and provide holistic and comprehensive support have been considered commendable and vital to the success of the project. This synergy was made possible mainly by the projects effort to create a coordinated mechanism through which its frontline field workers receive trainings together, participate actively in continuous monitoring, evaluation and learning activities. The findings indicated that the CBR project has done quite an important job by persuading sector offices to pay attention to child protection issues and at the same time mainstreaming these issues with their day-to-day activities. Important processes have also been driven forward as continued efforts have been put into incessant networking and dialogue with government partners and a series of workshops at the Amhara regional level that brought together key actors from different sectors to discuss and plan ways to mainstream disability in their respective sector plans and implementation systems.

The review finds that despite continued efforts, visible and sustainable results from the promotion of intersectoral linkages among key sectors and creation of synergy to address disability issues in a coordinated and sustainable manner are not sufficiently evidenced. One of the challenges that affected the formation of intersectoral linkage was the fact that the sector offices prioritize their own sector specific activities which makes it difficult to organize a discussion forum where every sector is represented. The high level of staff turnover in the respective government sector offices also challenged the intersectoral linkage efforts and ownership among sectors. More advocacy is recommended to further strengthen ownership and systemic changes among key sectors and actors.

Gender sensitive interventions

The review found that the project gives special focus for girls with disabilities because they face more challenges than boys children with disabilities. The project emphasizes the different risks that girls and boys face and the different needs they have and includes this in awareness raising activities and education of parents. Also issues such as gender-based violence and sexual abuse are specifically addressed and measures taken to prevent girls exposure. The project is also working with the Women and Children Affairs offices, community members, and teachers to strengthen the capacity of key law enforcement actors such as the police in order to ensure protection of women with disabilities or women with a disabled child.

Review findings also showed that school clubs which are organized by the project transmit messages about gender equality and equity in addition to other messages about disability. There are radio programs in 8 schools that transmit different issues like human trafficking, gender based violence, labor exploitation etc. In addition, fieldworkers of the project use these recordings during traditional coffee ceremonies to inform and discuss with the communities.

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Assessment of Results:

This section presents the key achievements of the project following the main objectives of the CBR project:

Improving the Health Condition of children with disabilities

To improve the health condition of children with disabilities, the CBR project designed and implemented different trainings and awareness activities in the targeted kebeles. As a result, hygiene practices significantly improved, as well as the provision of medical treatment such as physiotherapy and assistive devices like wheelchair & crutches. The project strengthened referral pathways and conducted capacity building training for health extension workers and community members on issues such as basic rehabilitation and health care. Selected health extension workers, also received sign language training. Support to and training for mothers of children with disabilities has also been identified as a key intervention to improving the overall health situation of children with disabilities.

Two regional level workshops were conducted in the project period, focusing on mainstreaming rehabilitation in the health extension program and existing health care services. This is a recognized step towards advocating and mainstreaming rehabilitation services for people with disability in the health care delivery system with a positive impact on the overall improvement of health care service provided for children and youth with different disabilities.

Improving Awareness and Social Integration

One of the most important results achieved by the project has been the change on the longstanding negative views of the community toward children with disabilities and their parents/ caregivers. A key factor to this achievement has been the implementation of several awareness and sensitization initiatives at family, community and local government level through parental guidance, community dialogues and mobilization activities as well as training and cooperation with religious leaders that have an important role in the communities. This has led to a reduction of social isolation and withdrawal of children with disabilities from the public sphere as social stigma is reduced and parents and caregivers gain confidence and acceptance. Through child rights/wellbeing and disability clubs in schools children have gained knowledge and awareness on disabilities and communicated this to their community through drama, poem recitals and other community activities. A focus on encouraging children with disabilities to participate in sports activities has also contributed to enhanced social integration in schools.

Informants also reported that the community awareness and social mobilization component of the CBR project has had a spill over effect on other non CBR areas as people in surrounding areas hear of the advances made for children with disabilities and ask for the same access to services and capacity building. A key informant commented the following:

“What is interesting to see at this particular point in time is that people from outside of the project’s catchment / those areas that were not covered by the service/ have started to adopt the project approach and started to deal with their own problem instead of hiding it. Many parents in these areas are no longer keeping their children out of the public sight.

Because of the projects effort, community members are increasingly reporting different forms of child abuse to the police or other relevant agencies, including violence and abuse against children with disabilities. According to KIIs and FGDs, this was previously not the case.

The project is also playing a significant role in meeting the existing economic needs of children with disabilities and other vulnerable children living in very poor households. The project has initiated small grant schemes and saving groups through which parents/ caregivers of children with disabilities get access to seed money to start a business which they believe is profitable or cost effective. These people are now getting good profit from their investment on viable business enterprises which is improving their socio-economic status. This has again enabled several parents to send their children to school and helped them pay medical expenses for their family.

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Access to Education

With regard to education, the project played a key role in increasing the enrollment of children with disabilities in to schools. Because of the support provided by the project, children with visual and hearing impairments especially have managed to attend formal schooling. Through a specialized Montessori centre children with disabilities can learn at their own pace and catch up education they may have missed and eventually transit to regular classes. This centre also serves as a training centre for teachers. A challenge however is that teachers who have been trained in special needs education are getting better recognition and are looking for greater opportunities, better remuneration and benefit packages in urban areas. Likewise, parents of children with disabilities are sending their children to bigger towns looking for these teachers. Owing to the awareness of the community about disability and rights, the demand for teachers trained in special needs education has already outstripped the supply the rural project areas.

Key Enablers and Barriers

Enablers

- ✓ **The trainings organized to CBR staff, those of the sectors' offices as well as the community have significantly changed people's old and negative perceptions toward** children with disabilities.
- ✓ The continued effort and investment by the project to raise community awareness on disability related issues enhanced the commitment of the public to help in facilitating the successful execution of the project. Furthermore, the willingness of the community to accept the messages being communicated has been one of the factors that are assisting the project. Because of the rigorous effort exerted by all pertinent entities, the community is now more likely to report to the police or other law enforcement agencies of any physical or psychological abuse committed against children with disabilities.
- ✓ The Community Care and Support Coalitions (CCCs) have played a very supportive role in facilitating the overall field work of the CBR project through identification of cases, referral and responding for child inappropriate treatment within their locality.
- ✓ Through its capacity building support and school based child protection and participation structures, the project has managed to actively engage the school community to do its work. Schools have remained ideal partners or models to convey important messages to the community. The available schools in the woreda where the project is being implemented have played significant role in bringing about the desired change as far as the protection of the rights of children with disabilities is concerned. They have been instrumental in motivating parents to send their children to school.
- ✓ The facilitation, supervision and coordination role that many of the sector offices involved in the project implementation played also contributed to the success of the project.
- ✓ The active involvement of some influential and open-minded members of the community that include religious leaders and elders was very useful for achieving the desired result.
- ✓ Access to saving groups and small grants has given poor households/ parents or caregivers of children with disabilities the opportunity to start small family projects. This has intern motivated other members of the community to start their own small business. The ripple effect has created favorable image of the project among non-beneficiaries.
- ✓ The success of the project is also attributed to the active involvement of all key actors, stakeholders including that of the community and direct beneficiaries and the continuous effort of the project to bring stakeholders together.

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Barriers

- ✓ It has taken a relatively long time to bring about the required attitudinal change in the community regarding disability. Initially, some parents were themselves resistant to change and it took them time to embrace the project. Key informants reported that the first discrimination of children with disabilities in the project areas starts at home and some fathers even reject their children who are either mentally or physically challenged. They were also abandoning their wives as if they are responsible for **their children's** disability. Addressing such knowledge and attitudinal barriers was not an easy task for the project and it required a lot of time, resource and patience to make it happen.
- ✓ Despite several capacity building training programs provided to sector offices, some of them lack the motivation to address the deep-rooted challenges facing children with disabilities. Hence, lack of commitment on the part of some partners has remained one of the barriers for achieving the desired results.
- ✓ The problem associated with children with disabilities is too massive to address with the available budget or resources because of the large number of children who demand the project support. Unless additional resources are mobilized from different sources, it is extremely difficult to accommodate as many children as possible and deal with the problem they are in.
- ✓ High turnover of teachers, especially as those that have been trained seek better job opportunities in the cities, is a challenge. Also other teachers show low interest to be trained and adapt their lessons to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities. This might be because they are from the same community and they may not be immune to negative community perception on disability.
- ✓ Due to topography and distance, and lack of effective transportation, CBR field workers find it difficult to visit the remote rural neighborhoods and kebeles frequently.
- ✓ Schools and the inter sectorial activities have been affected due to the conflict (basic services like schools were closed, transportation was interrupted etc.). Due to the unrest, it was difficult to bring together different sectors to focus on the project activities.
- ✓ Transportation problems in some cases to bring the children to the centers where services are provided and take them back to their home were also identified as hindering factors.

Partnership

Partnership implies a joint commitment to long term interaction, shared responsibility for achievement, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and balance of power². The review found that the CBR project is working closely with various stakeholders both at the community and government level and the project has created a structure that has involved the key stakeholders. Interviewing key stakeholders, the review found mixed opinions on the functionality of the established structure and ownership, with some believing that the project has been able to create a strong cooperation and engagement amongst stakeholder, while others were less optimistic and concerned about level of ownership, involvement and sustainability. Some KIIs pointed to the structure still not being well established and functional as various stakeholders seem to have a loose relationship. This could be mainly because of lack of formal arrangements, such as service agreements, memorandums of understanding and **contracts that can help secure and sustain partners'** involvement. Furthermore, the absence of a clear definition of the nature and form of partnership with and among key stakeholders and clearly defined roles and shared responsibilities of each could have contributed to the limited availability and functionality of a systemic partnership.

² Fowler in Brehm, 2004:18)

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Through providing capacity building support and organizing stakeholder forums, the project has exerted a strong effort to ensure stakeholders participation at implementation phase. Most of the key informants confirmed that the key partners have participated in the project planning and design phase mainly by participating in the launch workshops and providing feedback. However, there was no tangible opportunity created to ensure that key government stakeholders participated starting from the problem identification, situation analysis, activity and budget planning phase.

Informants from Chilga (where the project was phased out in 2014) indicated that **the project's partnership with the woreda's health, education and women affairs office has been very good throughout the whole project** and that key partners and stakeholders including the community, and the target population were actively involved from the start. The success of the activities were for the most part attributed to the participation of key sector offices and other stakeholders. Also the government had shown great resolve for bringing the project to a successful end. All issues were collectively decided by stakeholders and/ or sector offices that have direct interest in the project. A key informant from the government office commented the following on participation of sector offices in project implementation:

“All of us were very much involved at all stage of the project's planning, implementation and monitoring. All activities that were to be performed on quarterly, biannual and annual basis were clearly stipulated in the plan. Our comments and opinions were seriously considered by the project and included in the plan. In fact we had a common plan. Eventually the plans were made known by the kebeles. All key actors were represented by their respective focal persons. The same applies to implementation and monitoring stage of the project”

Participation of children and community

One of the key threads running through all CBR programs is participation and it is important that all key stakeholders, particularly people with disabilities and their family members, are actively involved at all stages of the management cycle. The review indicated that the project has carried out activities to promote community participation, particularly participation of children with disabilities and other vulnerable children, their parents and caregivers. However, the effort made to ensure participation at design and planning stage as well as monitoring and evaluation appears to be an area that requires strengthening.

The project has put in place several school clubs, which are active and passionate in working to create awareness in the schools about disability issues. Children with disabilities are also actively involved in the clubs and the participation of children in the schools has brought a wider impact in the communities where the schools are located. Several of the children have reported that their participation has changed their knowledge and actions towards persons with disability. But there have also been challenges as there are limited resources and children report that at times the support and guidance they receive from the school club leaders, usually teachers or the field rehabilitation workers is minimal. The children also pointed out that there is lack of clear and defined criteria as to how children with disabilities get the different service and benefits.

An important point that should be followed up is that even though the project has managed to train some teachers and CBR workers on sign language and braille, the assistance provided to children with hearing and visual impairment to air their voice about the project and participate meaningfully other than in receiving support was very minimal. Especially, the effort made to ensure participation of children with intellectual disabilities needs to be improved.

Community participation and ownership are cornerstones of the project and the review found that community mobilization and coffee ceremonies have given parents and caregivers of beneficiary children an arena to voice their support or concerns related to project activities and modes of delivery.

The Community Care Coalitions (CCC) which is a structure set up by the government is being used as a strategy to sustain the project. Usually the coalition comprises of various community representatives like elderly people in the community, religious leaders and a representative of the local level administration. In some cases, the CCC seem to work very well however in other cases the CCC has a higher turnover and lacks consistency and commitment to sustain the project.

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Sustainability

Sustainability plans were outlined at the design stage of the project. One of the main sustainability plans was networking CBR with UoG academic programs and community service agendas as the program is based in a government higher education institution where community service is given a higher priority and the University of Gondar will take over the program and sustain different modalities in the academic exercises. The other plan was to work in close collaboration with government sectors so that these key sectors share the experience of the project and sustain the outcomes of the program. The review assessed the sustainability measures built in to the project based on the framework aspects of 1) effective leadership 2) partnership 3) community ownership 4) use of local resources and 5) building capacity:

1) The review finds that the use of effective leadership in management of the project in general and the high credibility and trust associated with the University of Gondar as a lead institution in the CBR project is one of the key opportunities to ensure sustainability.

2) The review indicated that the various stakeholders primarily Gondar university, the woreda health, education, women and child affairs office, the schools, the CCC and others seem to have a loose and informal relationship. The project therefore should look at re-strategizing its partnership approaches to make sure that a functional and system based partnership is created with and among the key stakeholders to maximize opportunities for sustainability.

3) The review found that the community ownership of the project coupled with the socioeconomic improvement of families and caregivers because of the IGA support provided by the project plays a key role in ensuring the sustainability of the project outcomes. However, findings from the interviews and FGDs carried out showed that the level of community awareness and ownership created may not go to the extent of comfortably educating others about disability.

It is believed that the community care and support coalition will take over the responsibility of sustaining community level project activities and outcomes in case the donor withdraws its budgetary support and the **project's life time comes to an end. However**, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of these groups and shift their focus beyond community awareness and mobilization activities and prepare them to take over responsibilities to ensure sustainability of the project. Furthermore, sustainable strategies and plans should be outlined for the CCC on how they will continue to integrate project activities and outcomes in their operation and sustain the project outcomes as well. The projects efforts to promote volunteerism and integrate voluntary service as part of its community level activities seem to be minimal. Voluntary service is one of the pillars for ensuring sustainability of CBR programs. Thus, the project needs to consider setting up a contextualized plan to promote volunteerism in support of the CBR program.

4) One of the key interventions to ensure sustainability of CBR programs is to reduce the programs dependency on human, financial and material resources from external sources. The project has played a key role in improving the socio-economic situation of parents/ caregivers of children with disabilities and other vulnerable children through engaging in income generating activities. However, the project interventions to systematically encourage and support these beneficiaries to take over responsibilities to provide for basic needs of their children is seemingly minimal. Thus, there still seems to be a continued feeling of dependency on the project among most of the IGA beneficiaries who participated in the review. This might threaten the potential for sustainability of the outcomes.

The review also showed that some of the rehabilitation materials and assistive devices such as wheel chairs that provided to the children are not produced locally making it difficult to replace the parts easily. The project needs to strengthen its effort to initiate and strengthen partnerships with local institutions such as the Technical and Vocational education and training institutions to ensure that the spare parts are produced locally and accessed to the beneficiaries locally with affordable cost.

5) The project has carried out several capacity building activities to enhance the capacity of stakeholders to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate CBR programs. The skills training interventions that benefitted children with disabilities, business related trainings for parents and care givers who benefited from IGA support as well as trainings provided to teachers, students, health workers, social workers, the CCC and other stakeholders are all

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encouraging actions taken to ensure sustainability. The review found that these efforts might play as potential opportunities to ensure sustainability of the project outcomes.

However, regarding capacity of the key government stakeholders, most of the projects effort on capacity building seems to have focused on individuals rather than strengthening the capacity of the system with in the key government sector offices. Investing more on establishing mechanisms in the system rather than individuals who are replaced every now and then can be a viable approach to ensure better sustainability.

Chilga:

Reviewing sustainability of the project in Chilga after phase out in 2014, has shown that the community and government officials still feel ownership and continue to work to improve the rights of children with disabilities. Structures that were established during the project have been maintained the woreda education office is taking actions to ensure sustainability of the project outcomes. A key informant from the woreda education office commented that the government has allocated budget to reach children with disabilities **who didn't benefit from** the project because they were situated in geographically inaccessible kebeles. Also efforts to strengthen the socio-economic condition of families of children with disabilities and access to services has succeeded and sustained even after the project has phased out. Former beneficiaries who participated in the FGDs indicated that the project has left several lasting results that they are always proud of and they are ready to support the project if it starts operation in other kebeles that were not reached before.

However, most of the participants agreed that not all project activities and outcomes have sustained. One project activity worth mentioning is the coffee ceremony activity which brings together parents of children with disabilities, the children themselves and other community members together to discuss on issues related to **disability and raise awareness couldn't sustain after the project phased out mainly because no one can cover the** cost associated with the coffee ceremony. Furthermore, some of the saving groups organized with support from the project have also ceased operation after taking the loan.

Replicability of project components/ approaches

The review found that several project components and approaches could be replicated in other countries and in other SCN programs, but intervention should always be grounded in the local context.

Awareness raising and community mobilization

In order to improve community awareness on disability issues and promote positive attitude towards children with disabilities, the project implemented a number of activities including coffee ceremony sessions, celebration of the African Child Day and the International Day of Disability, schools based sensitization events, training on basic child wellbeing, leadership and communication, monthly community conversation/dialogue sessions and provision of positive parenting education for selected community members.

These awareness creation and community mobilization activities were designed in a way that ensure the engagement of key actors found in the project implementation areas including religious leaders, school community, government sectors and other community level structures such as the Community Care Coalitions. These efforts brought significant change on the longstanding negative view of the community towards children with disabilities and their parents/ caregivers and made a positive influence on the parents to avoid keeping their children from public sight. Children and their parents also started developing the confidence to ask for the protection of their rights.

The awareness and community mobilization efforts proved to be effective in promoting children with disabilities knowledge and understanding in the community about the cause of disability and that children with disabilities have rights and can learn and achieve a variety of things if they are given the opportunity to participate in the social life of the community and are not discriminated against. These achievements indicate the importance of wide community mobilization and promotion activities in creating a favorable foundation to curb the structural barriers, promote community ownership of interventions and achieve a better life for children with disabilities in

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the community. This approach could be replicated in other communities where there is a deep rooted negative perception and lack of community awareness towards disability and can also be mainstreamed in other child protection programs of SCN.

Promoting participation of children with disabilities in project, school and social activities

The project has carried out several activities to promote community participation in general and participation of children with disabilities, other vulnerable children and their parents and care givers in particular. In order to promote participation of children with disabilities in various project activities, the CBR program supported the establishment and strengthening of child right/wellbeing and disability school clubs that are involved in different child protection activities including community awareness creation on disability. This has created engagement, knowledge and ownership amongst the children themselves and creates opportunities for these children.

Furthermore, the project recognizes that participation of children and youth with disabilities in sport activities can bring a great impact to improve the social participation and integration of people with disabilities in their societies. As a result, the CBR program started working with the district sport administration office and children with disabilities were selected to attend regular training by the sport office. The project also supports activities to make sure that children with disabilities have access to mini media that transmits important messages to the school community.

To this end the participation of children in the CBR project has impacted the lives of children in various ways, increased their social participation in general and decreased discriminated. Such effective interventions that promote active participation of children with disabilities in school, community and social activities could be easily replicated in other similar situations and contribute to effectiveness and sustainability of Inclusive programs elsewhere.

Engaging Schools

Working closely with schools and mobilizing the school community where CBR projects are implemented plays a significant role in bringing about the desired change as far the protection of the rights of children with disabilities and their access to basic services is concerned. Through its capacity building support and school based child protection and participation structures, the project has managed to actively engage the school community to act as role models and agents to convey important messages on disability to the community. The schools have also been instrumental in challenging discrimination and motivating parents to send their children with disabilities to school.

The trainings and other capacity building support provided to the school community (students, teachers, school principals, etc.) largely contributed to the overall improvement towards better access to education for children with different disabilities and in improving disability inclusive education service in the targeted schools. The findings indicate that ensuring active engagement and participation of schools is key to furthering inclusion.

Promoting socioeconomic empowerment

The CBR project organized parents of children with disabilities in local saving groups where they could get access to seed money to start their own small businesses. This initiative was intended to improve the livelihood of parents of children with disabilities and ensure sustainable ways to meet the basic needs of their children. In order to make the beneficiaries profitable/successful, a basic business skills training has been given prior to depositing the startup capital/money in their bank account. Most of the beneficiaries of income generating activities (IGA), have started engaging in local marketing, local beverages preparation like malting of grains, home gardening, production and cultivation of vegetables, sheep rearing etc. Also young adults with physical disabilities have gotten the opportunity to engage in IGA. These people are now getting good profit from their investment on viable business enterprises and improving their socio-economic status. Thanks to the IGA support, many of these poor household are sending their children to school and can now afford the medical expense for their family. Several children with disabilities and other vulnerable kids who were on the verge of leaving school changed their **mind and continued their education because of the project's support.**

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This intervention has proved to be effective in giving lasting solutions to children with disabilities and their parents/ caregivers to set up their own business and not to rely on charitable free handouts for their survival. It also plays a key role in ensuring sustainability of the project outcomes. This approach to promote socio-economic empowerment of parents and care givers of children with disabilities can also be replicated elsewhere in similar contexts where poverty and financial barriers are among the underlining causes that limit children with disabilities from exercising their basic rights and accessing basic services.

Detailed Recommendations

Based on the main findings of the project review, the following recommendations are forwarded for consideration and action

Recommended Actions for Save the Children and University of Gondar

1. Most of the projects effort on capacity building seems to have focused on individuals rather than strengthening the capacity of the system with in the key government sector offices. Investing more on capacity building of the system rather than individuals who are replaced every now and then can be a viable approach to ensure better sustainability.
2. The project needs to reconsider its approaches to creating a functional and systemic partnership with key stakeholders. Among others, formal arrangements such as service agreements, memorandums of understanding and contracts that can help secure and sustain partners' involvement could be considered. Furthermore, the nature and form of partnership required with each stakeholder and among stakeholders need to be clearly defined and roles and shared responsibilities of each should be outlined.
3. The project needs to consider advocacy efforts at different levels to influence systemic changes to mainstream disability and other child protection issues in addition to its capacity building activities targeting individuals in key government sectors.

Recommended Actions for the University of Gondar

4. The project needs to make effective use of the social science departments at Gondar University (such as sociology, psychology, etc.) to improve access to social support such as counseling, psychotherapy etc. for CwDs and other children without appropriate care.
5. The efforts to promote participation of CwDs, CWAP and the community at project planning and monitoring phases need to be strengthened as the focus so far seems to be participation at implementation phase. For instance, child participatory methods could be used to gather information

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at project planning and monitoring stage to give target children a voice and identify their actual needs directly from them and design implementation approaches that work for their context.

6. A Concerted effort has been exerted to create community sense of ownership of the project. However, findings showed that the level of community awareness and ownership created may not go to the extent of comfortably educating others about disability. Thus, the project needs to identify, train and empower voluntary role model community members who will take the initiative and responsibility to carryout community awareness and education on issues pertinent to the project objectives.
7. Voluntary service is one of the pillars for ensuring sustainability of CBR programs. The projects efforts to promote volunteerism and integrate voluntary service as part of its community level activities should be strengthened by setting up a targeted and contextualized strategy and plan to promote volunteerism in support of the CBR program.

Recommended Actions for the University of Gondar and Woreda Health, Education and Women Affairs Offices

8. Most of the projects resource is mobilized from external funding sources. In order to expand opportunities for sustainability, the project needs to strengthen its interventions to ensure adequate use and mobilization of local and self-generated resources including from the local government, the community, stakeholders and others.
9. The project needs to strengthen its effort to initiate and strengthen partnerships with local institutions such as the Technical and Vocational education and training institutions to ensure that the spare parts for assistive devises are produced locally and accessed to the beneficiaries locally with affordable cost.
10. Sustainable strategies and plans should be outlined for the CCC on how they will continue to integrate project activities and outcomes in their operation and sustain the project outcomes as well.

Recommended Actions for the University of Gondar and Woreda Microfinance Office

11. In order to strengthen opportunities for sustainability of the women IGA and saving groups, the project needs to consider ways to work with the woreda microfinance office and link the existing women IGA and saving groups with the woreda microfinance structure so that they will have better

Report – brief version

access to business opportunities