

Community-Based Disability Inclusion Insights

Sustaining Inclusion Efforts

Breaking down Barriers

Text only version

About this publication

Community-Based Inclusion Insights is published by Breaking down Barriers, a knowledge initiative bridging research and practice. Its aim is to unlock the power of Community-Based Rehabilitation and Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBR/CBID) to realize disability rights. This report combines research and practitioner perspectives about key CBR/CBID challenges, offering practical, evidence-based guidance.

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This report is published as an open resource to support learning and exchange across the CBR/CBID community. We kindly request that Liliane Fonds and the partner organisations named above are acknowledged in any use or adaptation of these materials.

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Executive summary

CBR/CBID programmes are widely used to improve the lives and rights of persons with disabilities, especially in low-resource settings. Many programmes deliver strong results while they are running. However, once external support ends, these results are often difficult to sustain. This report shows that sustainability should not be treated as a final project phase, but as a design challenge that needs to be addressed from the start.

The report draws on a literature review, a global survey across 25 countries, and country studies from Zambia, Cameroon, and Rwanda. It shows that sustainability depends on progress across several connected areas. A key finding is that long-term sustainability does not happen unless CBR/CBID becomes part of routine public systems. This requires a shift in responsibility, authority, and financing. Without this shift, programmes may continue for a while, but they do not become part of everyday government practice. While sustainability has multiple dimensions, this report gives particular attention to how programmes become embedded in government systems (policy integration), where it provides the most detailed analysis.

Four dimensions shape sustainability: community engagement, financial sustainability, policy integration, and operational capacity. Partnerships cut across all of these. Programmes face problems when participation is limited to consultation rather than real decision-making, when funding depends on short-term donor cycles, when policies are not backed by budgets and routines, and when systems depend on individuals rather than institutions. These are not just implementation issues, but deeper structural constraints.

The global survey confirms these patterns. Practitioners identify financial sustainability and policy integration as the main challenges. Many sustainability strategies focus on securing additional external funding to keep programmes running. In practice, this reinforces externally funded and accountable project systems, rather than shifting programmes into public planning, budgeting, and administrative systems.

The country studies show that early design choices strongly shape whether and how CBR/CBID becomes part of government systems. Because CBR/CBID is inherently multi-dimensional, programmes often engage multiple ministries from the outset. However, institutionalisation requires depth of institutional anchoring before coordination can be expanded across ministries. When CBR/CBID is placed within a clearly designated lead government body and supported by domestic financing, responsibilities are more likely to become part of routine planning, supervision, and reporting. This creates a basis for coordination across ministries. When this does not happen, coordination remains NGO-led, funding stays external and tied to donor accountability, and activities continue without becoming embedded in public systems.

These findings suggest a shift in how sustainability should be approached. Programmes need to move from delivering services to building institutional ownership. In practice, many programmes rely on NGO-led coordination linked to donor accountability and financial control. These systems are designed to meet external reporting requirements, as accountability and financial control remain with external actors, which structurally limits the transfer of authority. While these arrangements support delivery in the short term, they reinforce project-based ways of working and make it harder to embed programmes in public systems. To address this, programmes need to identify a lead government body from the start, align activities with existing

government roles and routines, secure domestic funding, and deliberately transfer authority instead of maintaining parallel project structures.

The Rwanda case study shows how these issues can be identified and addressed during implementation. Through participatory sustainability reviews using the CBR/CBID Sustainability Enhancement Tool, developed in this project, stakeholders identified gaps in financing, unclear mandates, and continued reliance on project-based approaches. This helped them make timely adjustments and build a shared understanding of what is needed for longer-term sustainability.

Sustaining CBR/CBID requires deliberate choices early on about where responsibility, funding, and authority are located. Without these choices, programmes may achieve results, but remain dependent on externally funded project systems rather than becoming part of routine public systems.

Introduction

Authors: Jan Apperloo and Willem Elbers

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities ([UNCRPD](#)) provides a clear, globally recognised framework for equal rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities in society. However, in 2025, an estimated 1.3 billion people – about 16% of the global population – including 240 million children experience significant disability (WHO 2025). 80% of these people live in low- and middle-income countries. These figures underline the scale of the challenge — and the need for disability inclusion efforts that are not only effective during projects, but able to continue and adapt once external support declines.

Community-based disability inclusion initiatives are widely used in low-resource settings to promote equal rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities. Typically designed as multi-dimensional approaches, they connect health, education, livelihood, social and empowerment within a single framework. As such it are initiatives to realize the rights outlined in the UNCRPD¹. This report uses the umbrella term ‘CBR/CBID programmes’ to refer to these initiatives.

CBR and CBID: how this report uses these terms

Across organisations and countries, the terms Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) are used in different ways. In some settings CBID is more common; in others CBR remains the main label, and many practitioners use both.

In this report, we use CBR/CBID as an umbrella term for rights-based, multi-dimensional, community-based disability inclusion initiatives that work with persons with disabilities, families, and communities. We acknowledge that, in practice, CBR/CBID is as much an aspiration as an operational reality and that programmes do not always give equal weight to all dimensions at the same time, prioritising particular dimensions.

Sustainability

This edition of *Community-Based Disability Inclusion Insights* focuses on the sustainability of CBR/CBID. Many programmes struggle with sustainability, and this report explores causes and solutions. This publication is developed as part of the Breaking down Barriers learning trajectory supported by Liliane Fonds, which bridges rigorous academic research and practical application. It is written for NGO programme leaders, government counterparts, donors, and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) involved in designing, financing, or implementing CBR/CBID programmes. While this report examines the sustainability of CBR/CBID programmes from different angles, it gives special attention to policy integration: the challenge of embedding CBR/CBID within government systems, especially in relation to mandates and budgets. This is also where the report makes its strongest contribution. It does not assess the quality of CBR/CBID programmes or the effectiveness of services delivered to children and youth with disabilities.

¹ CBR/CBID also contributes to health and rehabilitation objectives defined in the [WHO rehabilitation 2030 program](#). CBR/CBID is a strategy for comprehensive service delivery to realize unmet rehabilitation needs.

Outline of this report

The report proceeds in four parts. First, a literature review examines what existing research shows about the sustainability of CBR/CBID. Second, a global practitioner survey explores how these challenges are experienced across 25 countries. Three country studies then examine institutional sustainability in depth: the study from Zambia compares two pathways of government uptake; the study from Cameroon analyses how different government engagement strategies of civil society shape institutional anchoring; and the study from Rwanda tests a participatory sustainability assessment tool. Drawing on a synthesis chapter, the report concludes with practical recommendations for NGOs, governments, donors and OPDs, translating the evidence into strategic choices for strengthening long-term sustainability.

1. Understanding CBR/CBID Sustainability

Findings from Literature

Authors: Ngoran Mathew & Willem Elbers

1.1 Introduction

Why do many CBR/CBID programmes struggle to endure once external funding declines, even when they perform well during implementation? This chapter draws on a systematic review of academic research to identify the most consistent patterns behind programme sustainability.

1.2 The foundations of CBR/CBID sustainability

The literature review identified four foundational pillars of sustainability that recur consistently across studies and capture the core institutional conditions that determine whether CBR/CBID programmes move beyond time-bound projects and become part of routine practice. These pillars are community engagement, financial sustainability, policy integration, and operational capacity. Table 1.1 summarises the four pillars and the recurring weaknesses associated with each.

Table 1.1 The four foundational pillars of CBR/CBID sustainability

Foundational Pillars	Core function	Typical vulnerability pattern
Community engagement	Builds legitimacy and accountability through meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and community actors.	Participation remains consultative rather than decision-making; weak accountability mechanisms.
Financial sustainability	Mobilises stable and predictable resources beyond donor cycles.	Heavy donor dependence; lack of affordability analysis or transition plans.
Policy integration	Anchors CBR/CBID within governmental systems, mandates, and budgets.	Policy recognition without implementation or funding.
Operational capacity	Sustains delivery through staffing stability, organisational systems, and learning processes.	Reliance on individuals; weak organisational systems and turnover.

Community engagement is consistently linked to sustainability when persons with disabilities and communities shape priorities and oversight through recognised structures. Where engagement is limited to consultation or volunteer mobilisation, community commitment often weakens once external facilitation declines.

Financial sustainability remains a central vulnerability across contexts. When no alternative funding source or government budget line is secured before donor funding ends, programme activities often shrink or stop — even when the results have been strong.

Policy integration happens when CBR/CBID functions are embedded in the routine work, mandates and budgets of government ministries—such as health, education, or social protection—rather than delivered through parallel projects.

Operational capacity underpins all other pillars. Staffing instability, weak financial management, and limited learning systems repeatedly undermine programmes that otherwise enjoy community support or policy recognition.

Partnerships as a cross-cutting foundation

Across all four pillars, partnerships shape sustainability trajectories. Effective collaboration among NGOs, OPDs, community structures, and government agencies influences whether financing can be mobilised, policies implemented, operational systems strengthened, and community engagement sustained. The review also flags persistent partnership challenges: arrangements are often informal, project-bound, or dependent on personal relationships, with unclear roles and limited accountability. More durable programmes rely on structured coordination platforms, explicit division of responsibilities, and sustained investment in joint planning and trust-building.

1.3 How the four pillars interact

The review shows that the four pillars are closely connected and tend to reinforce one another over time. When funding is unstable, organisations struggle to retain staff, invest in training, or build learning systems, which weakens operational capacity and limits what programmes can deliver. When CBR/CBID is not well integrated into government systems, access to public budgets and authority remains limited, keeping programmes dependent on donors. Weak community engagement reduces local legitimacy and political support, making it harder to secure government backing or embed services in public systems—creating a cycle in which several weaknesses persist at once rather than being solved separately.

Partnerships strongly influence how these interactions play out in practice. When collaboration is well organised and roles are clear, partners can strengthen several pillars at the same time—for example by aligning funding, policy engagement, and community structures. When partnerships are weak or project-based, fragmentation increases and programmes struggle to become embedded in wider systems. This helps explain why stand-alone technical fixes—such as new tools or short training courses—rarely lead to lasting change on their own.

1.4 Design implications from the literature

Overall, the review illustrates that sustainability should not be merely seen as a final project phase, but as an institutional design challenge that must be addressed across multiple domains from the outset. Table 1.2 translates the findings into forward-looking design choices for organisations working on CBR/CBID programmes.

Table 1.2 Design implications for strengthening CBR/CBID sustainability

Sustainability Foundational pillar	What programmes often underestimate	What stronger designs build in from the start
Community engagement	Participation treated as consultation rather than shared authority.	Formal decision-making roles for PWD, parents, caretakers and community actors; feedback mechanisms; leadership development and support for OPDs.
Financial sustainability	Assumptions of continued donor funding; late transition planning.	Financial transition pathways; affordability analysis; government co-financing; diversified revenue streams.

Policy integration	Focus on formal recognition rather than budgets and routines.	Embedding CBR/CBID in sector systems; budget-linked advocacy; clarified institutional mandates.
Operational capacity	Organisational systems treated as overhead.	Investment in HR, financial management, and learning systems; succession planning; institutional memory.
Partnerships (cross-cutting foundation)	Informal, project-bound collaboration.	Formal coordination platforms; clear roles; partnerships embedded in governance and financing structures.

2. CBR/CBID Sustainability in Practice

Findings from a Global Practitioner Survey

Authors: Ngoran Mathew & Willem Elbers

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from a global survey of 187 organisations in the Liliane Fonds network implementing community-based disability programmes across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It explores how practitioners themselves view the long-term sustainability of their work, the challenges they face most often, and the strategies they are using to keep activities going over time. The chapter is guided by the following question:

Where do CBR/CBID practitioners currently face the greatest sustainability challenges and which strategies do they report as most effective in responding to them?

This survey builds directly on the literature review presented in the previous chapter. Using the same four sustainability pillars — community engagement, financial sustainability, policy integration, and operational capacity — to systematically map practitioner experiences and views. The survey used the WHO-based definition of Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) as its conceptual reference. Respondents self-identified whether their programme(s) aligned with this definition and therefore qualified for participation. The findings provide insight into sustainability dynamics in this context but should not be interpreted as statistically representative of all CBR/CBID implementation globally.

2.2 Survey findings

In the survey, respondents assessed their programme's position across the four sustainability pillars, as well as the strength of their partnerships as a cross-cutting foundation. Overall, the survey confirms the relevance of the pillars identified in the literature. At the same time, respondents clearly differentiated between the pillars, rating some as more critical constraints on sustainability than others.

Financial sustainability and policy integration are perceived as the most problematic dimensions, community engagement occupies an intermediate position, and operational capacity and partnerships are rated relatively less problematic overall.

The tables below are based on open-ended survey questions that were later analysed and quantified. This means the patterns reflect what practitioners themselves chose to highlight about sustainability challenges and effective strategies, rather than answers shaped by predefined response options.

Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability is rated weakest overall: 41 % low/very low, 53 % moderate, and 6 % high/very high, indicating that most programmes remain heavily dependent on short-term or uncertain funding. As shown in image 2.1 funding constraints are dominated by donor dependence and unstable grant cycles. Respondents most often highlight strategies that extend or stabilise donor funding rather than those that structurally anchor programmes in domestic systems. Although government budget integration and diversification are widely recognised,

they appear less frequently than short-term coping strategies, underscoring persistent institutional barriers.

What strengthens Financial sustainability

Maintaining long-term relationships with existing donors	36 %
Submitting joint funding proposals with partner organisations	31 %
Running income-generating activities or social enterprises	28 %
Securing government co-financing or inclusion in governmental budgets	26 %
Actively diversifying donors and funding sources	25 %
Organising local fundraising and community resource mobilisation	24 %
Strengthening financial management and accountability systems	8 %

What weakens financial sustainability

Donor dependence & volatility	Weak domestic governmental financing
Reliance on a single donor (32 %)	Limited government support (11 %)
Short funding cycles (32 %)	Weak budget absorption (11 %)
High operating costs & fundraising gaps	Limited private-sector engagement
Limited fundraising staff (12 %)	Low corporate interest (6 %)
Rising operational costs (12 %)	Few partnership mechanisms (6 %)

Image 2.1: practitioner perspectives of financial sustainability strengths and weaknesses

Policy Integration

Policy sustainability is rated as 31 % low/very low, 56 % moderate, and 13 % high/very high, suggesting that most respondents' programmes have achieved only partial or uneven integration into government policies, administrative systems, and budgets, making this— together with funding—a central constraint on long-term continuity.

The challenge patterns that weaken policy integration shown in image 2.2 point to a persistent policy–practice gap: recognition of disability inclusion often outpaces government financing and enforcement. Advocacy and public awareness campaigns dominate reported effective strategies.

What strengthens policy integration

Continuous advocacy with line ministries and government officials	65 %
Public awareness campaigns on disability rights and inclusion	39 %
Training government staff and service providers on CBR/CBID	18 %
Forming advocacy coalitions with NGOs and OPDs	16 %
Obtaining legal recognition or formal programme registration	14 %
Advocating for governmental budget allocations for CBR/CBID services	11 %
Providing programme data and evidence to policymakers	10 %

What weakens policy integration

Budget gaps & under-resourcing	Weak legal frameworks & enforcement
No funding attached to mandates (10 %)	Weak disability legislation (8 %)
Implementation unfunded (10 %)	Poor enforcement (8 %)
Limited political commitment	Weak coordination & bureaucratic capacity
Reliance on champions (8 %)	Low awareness among officials (8 %)
Political turnover (8 %)	Fragmented sectoral coordination (7 %)

Image 2.2: practitioner perspectives of policy sustainability strengths and weaknesses

Community Engagement

Respondents rated the overall level of community engagement in their main programme as follows: 21 % low/very low, 58 % moderate, and 21 % high/very high, suggesting that most programmes encompass community engagement but that full decision-making authority and durable local structures remain uneven.

Weak community engagement is driven less by lack of participatory activities than by poverty, and limited community resources. Effective strategies emphasise shifting authority and capacity to community actors through decision-making roles and leadership structures.

What strengthens community engagement

Involving community members and PWDs in programme planning and decisions	47 %
Training community volunteers and local leaders	33 %
Disability-inclusion awareness campaigns at community level	30 %
Establishing and supporting local leadership committees or structures	24 %
Building and maintaining community volunteer networks	16 %
Placing persons with disabilities in formal leadership roles	13 %
Mobilising local financial or in-kind community contributions	9 %
Strengthening OPDs	6 %

What weakens community engagement

Economic constraints on participation	Weak local governance & power relations
Poverty limits engagement (25 %)	Lack of representative leadership (13 %)
Limited community resources (25 %)	Weak accountability mechanisms (13 %)
Stigma & discriminatory norms	Logistical barriers
Negative attitudes toward disability (10 %)	Distance & transport problems (5 %)
Exclusion from community forums (10 %)	Inaccessible meeting venues (5 %)

Image 2.3: practitioner perspectives of community engagement strengths and weaknesses

Operational Capacity

Operational capacity is rated relatively positively: 6 % low/very low, 41 % moderate, and 53 % high/very high, indicating that many respondents' programmes have established core systems and staffing, even if important weaknesses remain for a substantial minority.

Although organisations rate their capacity relatively highly, the challenge table reveals vulnerabilities in financial planning and staffing. The most frequently cited strategies directly address these weaknesses by stabilising internal systems and spreading skills across teams.

What strengthens operational sustainability

Formalising internal systems, procedures, and governance arrangements	46 %
Continuous training and professional development for staff	43 %
Partnering with other organisations to build technical capacity	20 %
Developing long-term organisational sustainability plans	19 %
Improving financial management and reporting systems	18 %
Recruiting, supervising, and retaining community volunteers	17 %

Strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems 11 %

What weakens operational sustainability

Financial fragility & planning gaps	Human-resource instability
Weak long-term financial planning (15 %)	High staff turnover (12 %)
No core funding (15 %)	Volunteer attrition (12 %)
Operational resource shortages	Weak data & learning systems
Lack of tools & transport (10 %)	Weak M&E systems (9 %)
Digital gaps (10 %)	Limited evidence for advocacy (9 %)

Image 2.4: practitioner perspectives of operational sustainability strengths and weaknesses

Partnerships

Partnership strength is rated 6 % low, 42 % moderate, and 52 % high, suggesting that many respondents’ programmes have built working collaborations, though these relationships are not yet consistently institutionalised across systems or ministries.

Partnership challenges centre on weak institutionalisation rather than lack of collaboration per se. Respondents highlight formal agreements and coordination mechanisms as the main routes to sustainability.

What strengthens partnerships

Participating in multi-stakeholder coordination platforms or networks	33 %
Investing in transparent communication and trust-building with partners	27 %
Signing formal Memoranda of Understanding that clarify roles	25 %
Conducting joint planning and decision-making with partners	24 %
Ensuring participation of OPDs in partnership structures	18 %
Building long-term strategic alliances with key partners	15 %

What weakens partnerships

Project-bound or unstable partnerships	Difficulty identifying suitable partners
Partnerships tied to projects (11 %)	Few entry points to government (9 %)
Reliance on individuals (11 %)	Limited OPD engagement (9 %)
Weak private-sector involvement	Coordination & role-clarity problems
Low corporate interest (8 %)	Unclear responsibilities (6 %)
No incentives for business engagement (8 %)	Weak joint planning mechanisms (6 %)

Image 2.5: practitioner perspectives of partnerships strengths and weaknesses

2.3 Key cross-cutting findings

Across the foundational sustainability pillars assessed in the survey, two constraints stand out most clearly: unstable funding and limited policy integration. Even where organisations report strong operational capacity or active partnerships, the lack of predictable financing and limited policy integration continues to limit long-term programme continuity.

In response, many organisations rely on strategies that help keep programmes running in difficult environments—such as maintaining donor relationships, advocacy with

ministries, or strengthening internal procedures—while fewer report success in securing long-term changes in governmental systems like permanent budget lines or full integration into government services.

Finally, the survey findings echo the patterns identified in the literature review by showing how closely the pillars interact in practice. Weak policy integration limits access to governmental resources, fragile partnerships constrain advocacy and coordination, and limited community authority undermines local legitimacy. Taken together, these dynamics suggest that sustainability depends less on isolated technical fixes and more on steady, coordinated progress across all five dimensions.

2.4 From survey concerns to institutional analysis

The literature review identified five key pillars of CBR/CBID sustainability. In the survey, organisations most often pointed to funding challenges and limited integration into government systems as the main ongoing obstacles in practice.

The country chapters examine these challenges in greater depth. The Zambia and Cameroon studies analyse how responsibility, budgets, and authority either shift into government systems — or remain project-bound — during implementation. The Rwanda chapter complements this by using a participatory review tool to help stakeholders identify these vulnerabilities early and discuss how responsibilities might gradually transfer. Together, the country cases move from broad patterns to concrete institutional dynamics shaping long-term continuity.

3. Government uptake of CBR/CBID

Evidence from Zambia

Authors: *Shishembwe Mwale, Willem Elbers and Thomas Mtonga*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings and recommendations from a study conducted in Zambia on the policy integration foundational pillar of CBR/CBID sustainability². It focuses on institutionalisation — the process through which responsibilities and resources move from externally supported programmes into government systems. For programmes that begin with donor funding and aim to deliver services at scale, institutionalisation within government systems is widely recognised as a key pathway to long-term sustainability.

The chapter is guided by one central question: *Which conditions shape government uptake of CBR/CBID in Zambia?* The analysis draws on a comparative study of two programmes, based on interviews, focus group discussions, and document review. It does not assess programme impact or quality, but concentrates specifically on understanding policy integration/institutionalisation. The analysis covers the implementation period of both programmes from 2021 to 2024 and does not assess longer-term post-exit developments.

3.2 Core drivers of institutionalisation

The comparative analysis of two CBR/CBID programmes in Zambia (hereafter Programme A and Programme B) demonstrates that sustainability is fundamentally a political–institutional challenge rather than a technical one. Institutionalisation depended on whether key conditions related to institutional anchoring, ministerial alignment, and resource commitment were in place early enough to support the transfer of responsibility to government systems. Differences in institutionalisation outcomes are not explained by programme quality, levels of participation, or alignment with national disability policy, all of which were broadly comparable across the two cases

Importantly, neither case represents full institutionalisation. Programme B achieved partial integration by placing primary responsibility within one lead ministry — Education — where some practices came part of government systems. By contrast, Programme A did not establish a clearly responsible lead ministry, and sustained integration within government systems did not occur during the project period.

It is important to note that both programmes adopted a multi-dimensional approach of CBR/CBID. Programme B's placement within the Ministry of Education clarified institutional responsibility, but did not reduce the multi-dimensional scope of implementation, which continued to involve health, social protection, and community-level actors. The distinction between the cases therefore lies in institutional anchoring rather than programme breadth.

² The academic study on which this chapter is based is: Mwale S., Elbers W., Mtonga T. (forthcoming). *When Does Community-Based Inclusive Development Become Institutionalised? A Political Economy Analysis of Two Cases in Zambia*

The contrast between programmes A and B depends on how ownership, budget commitments, authority, and routine practice come together and reinforce each other over time. Where these elements aligned and were sufficiently reinforced — as in parts of Programme B — CBR/CBID practices became (partly) institutionalised into government systems. Where these conditions did not sufficiently align— as in Programme A — activities and funding continue to rely on NGO coordination and donor funding.

A comparative analysis of the two cases identified four core drivers that shaped whether responsibility moved into government systems. Table 3.1 summarises these drivers, showing how they appeared in Programmes A and B and what they imply for future CBR/CBID design and sustainability strategies.

Table 3.1. Core drivers of CBR/CBID institutionalisation and implications for practice

Core driver	Programme A	Programme B	Implications for practice
Ownership incentives	Largely perceived as externally initiated; limited internal ownership; CBR/CBID had low salience in routine government planning and performance frameworks	Stronger ownership within the education sector, where activities aligned more closely with core mandates and daily responsibilities	Start with a deliberate ownership strategy: design CBR/CBID responsibilities so they strengthen officials' mandates and performance incentives. Consultation alone does not create ownership.
Budgetary commitment	No recurrent domestic budget line during the period studied; activities relied primarily on donor financing and were deprioritised as external funding declined	Tangible domestic financing within education created material stakes and visibility in government planning and reporting	Treat domestic financing as a threshold condition: secure recurrent allocations early. Policy references without budgets should be treated as non-institutionalisation.
Institutional fit	No clearly defined institutional home; dispersion of mandates increased coordination demands	Clear leadership within one ministry (education), benefiting from existing administrative hierarchy and established routines	Start by establishing clear institutional responsibility within one lead government body (the program remains multi-dimensional from the start). From this anchor, collaboration with other ministries can be developed.
Formal government authority	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services was key partner, but formal government authority remained weak: CBR/CBID was	Partial formal government authority emerged within education as ownership, budgets and institutional fit aligned	Design for clear government leadership, not NGO coordination. Designate and empower a public-sector authority early.

treated as external
and coordination
stayed NGO-led.

The sections below unpack each of these drivers in more detail and translate these patterns into concrete design recommendations.

Ownership incentives as the entry condition

Across both cases, political and bureaucratic ownership emerged as a key entry point for institutionalisation. CBR/CBID responsibilities were only taken up where political leaders or civil servants perceived them as advancing their recognised mandates, institutional legitimacy, or performance expectations. Where CBR/CBID outcomes were politically invisible, weakly linked to ministerial priorities, or irrelevant to bureaucratic appraisal systems, no actor sought to claim responsibility.

In programme A, CBR/CBID was often perceived within government as externally driven despite formal collaboration with the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services. Sector-specific service delivery — for example routine health or education activities — generally remained within officials' mandates. By contrast, however, cross-sector coordination, community committees, stakeholder forums, and CBR/CBID-specific reporting were widely treated by the government as project-linked rather than as core administrative responsibilities. As a result, CBR/CBID was not absorbed into routine government business and continued to depend heavily on NGO-led coordination.

In Programme B, ownership was neither comprehensive nor uniform, but it was clearly established within the Ministry of Education. Because CBR/CBID-related activities such as identification, referral, and school supervision aligned with existing educational responsibilities in inclusive education guidelines, officials within the Ministry of Education could plausibly claim these tasks as part of their formal mandate. This partial ownership was sufficient to initiate further steps toward institutional integration. This partial ownership was sufficient to initiate the incorporation of CBR/CBID tasks into routine planning, supervision, and reporting processes within the Ministry of Education, while the programme itself remained multidimensional.

Key Insight

CBR/CBID design should begin with a deliberate assessment of ownership incentives. NGOs and donors should identify which government ministrie(s) and which cadre of public officials can credibly claim CBR/CBID as part of their mandate, and why doing so benefits them institutionally or professionally. Participation, consultation, or endorsement on their own should not be treated as evidence of sustained ownership unless they are accompanied by shifts in mandates, supervision, and resource allocation.

Budgetary commitment as the materialisation of responsibility

Ownership alone did not lead to institutionalisation. What mattered was whether it translated into a government budget. That is the point where support moves from words to funded responsibility. The findings suggest that when a budget is allocated, CBR/CBID is no longer voluntary—it becomes part of what the government is expected to deliver.

In programme A, core CBR/CBID functions introduced or coordinated through the programme—such as community-based coordination, stakeholder forums, and cross-sector referral systems—relied on external financing. This reduced incentives for government actors to allocate domestic resources to these specific functions and allowed them to be treated as peripheral to core responsibilities.

In Programme B, limited but tangible domestic financing was committed within the inclusive education agenda. Although insufficient to sustain the full CBR/CBID model, these resources created material stakes in continuation. Once funds were allocated, CBR/CBID tasks became visible within planning and reporting processes, allowing them to be incorporated into routine supervision structures.

Key Insight

Domestic financing for core CBR/CBID functions should be secured early. Existing disability-inclusive budgets may support related activities, but sustained institutionalisation requires earmarked recurrent funding for CBR/CBID coordination and delivery. Policy references or plans without such budget commitments signal non-integration rather than progress.

Institutional fit as the condition for authority formation

The cases show that institutional fit — alignment between CBR/CBID functions and existing sectoral mandates of governments — is more consequential for sustainability than technical comprehensiveness. Where CBR/CBID had a clear institutional home, responsibility could be assumed and enforced; where mandates were fragmented, accountability remained diffuse. Programme B's placement within the Ministry of Education provided a clear administrative structure through which CBR/CBID responsibilities could be coordinated across national, provincial, and district levels. This reduced coordination demands and enabled authority to form incrementally within an existing administrative hierarchy.

By contrast, Programme A worked across several ministries without clearly assigning overall responsibility to one of them. The lack of a clearly designated lead ministry resulted in continued NGO-led coordination. There was not suddenly a handover of coordination when project structures were coming to an end, because no ministry had been institutionally positioned to assume that role.

Key Insight

Identify one lead ministry that takes clear responsibility for CBR/CBID within government. This does not mean reducing CBR/CBID to a single sector or abandoning its multi-dimensional character. Rather, it provides a clear institutional home from which coordination with other ministries can develop. Without a designated lead ministry, responsibility tends to remain unclear and collaboration becomes difficult to sustain once external funding stops.

Formal government authority as an emergent property

The findings show that durable institutionalisation requires a government actor with the mandate, legitimacy, and resources to enforce CBR/CBID responsibilities across the government system. What matters is authority: the capacity to require compliance through formal mandates, budgetary control, supervision, and reporting.

The findings show that NGO-led coordination does not, by itself, establish government authority. While it can temporarily ensure functionality — as observed in Programme A — it does not enable ministries or districts to compel action through their own systems. Although the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services in programme A was a key partner, formal government authority remained weak. CBR/CBID continued to be treated as an externally driven project and coordination was not absorbed into routine ministry systems once project structures were withdrawn. In Programme B, partial government authority emerged alongside stronger alignment in ownership, resource commitment, and institutional fit. This enabled some CBR/CBID practices to become part of routine administration.

Key Insight

NGOs should avoid substituting for government authority. A lead government body should be designated early, with formal mandate and control over resources. In practice, this requires authority over recurrent CBR/CBID budgets, staff time and job descriptions, supervision and reporting lines, and the ability to convene and direct other ministries. NGO-led coordination may improve short-term delivery but undermines long-term institutionalisation if it delays authority formation.

3.3 Path-dependent dynamics: why late fixes fail

A key finding of the study is that, in Zambia, institutionalisation was strongly influenced by early conditions: where ownership, financing, institutional fit, and authority aligned and reinforced each other, CBR/CBID became embedded in routine government practice; where this alignment did not take hold, progress remained limited and dependent on projects.

In Programme A, these conditions did not sufficiently align. Although bottom-up activities improved service access and administrative practices at district level, ownership did not translate into recurrent domestic budgets. Without budget commitments, formal authority did not consolidate within government systems. As a result, institutional embedding did not occur, and practices were not sustained once project structures were withdrawn.

This illustrates a path-dependent dynamic. Early design choices shape later possibilities. Where responsibility and financing are not transferred into government systems early in the programme lifecycle, later attempts to strengthen sustainability are likely to face sharply diminishing returns. Improvements introduced late in a programme — even well-designed ones — cannot easily compensate for missing upstream conditions such as mandates and budgets.

Key Insight

Institutionalisation must be designed from the outset. NGOs and donors should prioritise early transfer of responsibility, authority, and resources to government actors as part of a deliberate strategy to shift political incentives and bureaucratic routines, even where this constrains short-term delivery.

3.4 Reframing success and accountability

Finally, the findings challenge conventional notions of programme success. Strong implementation performance can coexist with weak sustainability; high-performing programmes such as Programme A, therefore, cannot be assumed to endure on that basis

alone. Vice versa, limited sustainability does not imply that a CBR/CBID programme is ineffective or poorly designed. Sustainability depends primarily on the extent to which responsibility becomes institutionalised within government systems, which in turn requires a shift in accountability from donors and NGOs toward government actors.

Key Insight

Monitoring and exit strategies should focus on who budgets, who supervises, and who is accountable after donor exit. Sustainability should be assessed in terms of transferred responsibility rather than project outputs alone. Individual commitment by focal points and champions can accelerate uptake, but durable sustainability depends on embedding these roles within formal mandates, supervision systems, and budgets.

4. Designing CBR/CBID for Government Uptake

Comparative research of three programmes in Cameroon

Authors: Jacques Chirac Awa, Willem Elbers and Valentine Ngalim

4.1 Introduction

As seen in the Zambia chapter, anchoring CBR/CBID in a lead ministry is central to government uptake (institutionalisation). The Cameroon study shifts the focus from analysing the conditions that shape uptake to examining the strategies NGOs used to achieve it³. It compares three programmes that followed different institutionalisation pathways in Cameroon and asks: *What programme strategies helped CBR/CBID responsibilities begin to shift into government systems during implementation — and which ones struggled to do so?*

All three programmes adopted a multi-dimensional design, addressing the different dimensions of the CBR matrix, and were still ongoing at the time of analysis. The chapter examines institutionalisation during implementation rather than providing definitive evidence of post-exit sustainability. It does not assess programme performance.

4.2 The three Cameroon cases

CBR/CBID programmes in Cameroon operate in a governance environment shaped by formal decentralisation alongside strong sectoral government control over staffing, budgets, and supervision systems. District administrations usually have little discretionary funding, and cross-sector collaboration is rarely part of routine planning. NGOs therefore face two linked strategic decisions: where to anchor CBR/CBID within government systems, and which type of institutionalisation pathway to prioritise during implementation — for example, investing primarily in coordination platforms, national policy frameworks, or embedding CBR/CBID in existing ministry sector plans.

The three long-running programmes examined here illustrate how these decisions played out in practice (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Overview of the three Cameroon programmes

Feature	Programme A (since 2009)	Programme B (since 2012)	Programme C (since 2011)
Pathway	Bottom-up entry without designated ministerial anchor	Top-down entry without designated ministerial anchor	Entry with designated ministerial anchor
Entry point	District sector offices (health, education, social affairs)	National ministries (health, education, social affairs)	Designated lead ministry (health)
Design emphasis	Coordination platforms	Policy frameworks	Ministry sector plans
Convening role	NGO-facilitated	NGO-facilitated	Government unit

³ The academic study on which this chapter is based is: Chirac A., Elbers W., Ngalim V. (forthcoming). From Projects to Government Systems: NGO Pathways to Embedding Community-Based Inclusive Development in Cameroon

Domestic resourcing	None	None	Limited
Routine embedding	Low	Low	Moderate
Uptake signals	Fragile	Primarily policy-level only	Partial

The key distinction between the programmes concerns two dimensions: (1) where engagement entered government systems (district level or national level), and (2) whether one lead ministry was clearly designated to take responsibility for CBR/CBID during implementation.

Programme A (bottom-up entry; no designated ministerial anchor) focused on strengthening collaboration among district, municipal, and regional-level services in health, education, social affairs, and OPDs. Joint committees were created, municipal and regional development plans reviewed to mainstream disability, referral pathways mapped, and frontline staff and duty bearers trained to identify and support persons with disabilities as well as respect national disability laws and the UNCRPD in the dispatch of their duties. Monthly coordination meetings were organised and chaired by NGO teams, who also followed up on agreed actions. These arrangements resulted in CBR/CBID budget lines at municipal and regional levels, improved collaboration during implementation, but CBR/CBID practices were rarely extended beyond targeted municipalities and regions. Importantly, no single ministry was formally designated to assume overall responsibility for coordinating and sustaining CBR/CBID within government systems during implementation.

Programme B (top-down entry; no designated ministerial anchor) prioritised national policy engagement and inter-ministerial dialogue. Ministries participated in steering committees, CBR/CBID language was inserted into disability strategies, and cross-sector frameworks were drafted. These processes raised the profile of disability inclusion and helped normalise it within ministerial discourse, creating potential entry points for later operational reform. During the period studied, however, government systems at municipal and regional levels changed only modestly: supervision tools and reporting formats had not yet been revised, local budgets generally did not include CBR/CBID activities, and NGO teams continued to coordinate pilot interventions. No ministry was clearly designated to translate policy commitments into routine operational responsibility.

Programme C (entry with designated ministerial anchor) deliberately embedded CBR/CBID inside the Ministries of Health's and Social Affairs' annual workplans. In this programme, the Ministry of Health was explicitly designated to take administrative responsibility for convening, supervision, and integration into routine planning and monitoring systems. The programme worked through existing supervisory chains, and supported district health officials and chiefs of social centres to integrate CBR/CBID interventions into work plans to ensure synergy between field operations and ministry level annual workplans. Over time, ministry staff began chairing coordination meetings and issuing instructions through formal channels. Public inputs remained modest — largely staff time and small operational costs — but they were recurrent and visible in sector planning documents.

4.3 Cross-case findings

Comparing the three programmes reveals four recurring elements within NGO strategies that proved central in efforts to achieve institutionalisation during implementation.

Anchoring shaped ownership

In programme C, which had a designated ministerial anchor, CBR/CBID activities closely matched existing government tasks such as capacitating and supervising service providers, conducting community outreach, and supervising frontline staff. Officials could present disability inclusion as part of their formal job, rather than as a temporary project. Officials increasingly referred to CBR/CBID as part of their ministry's core mandate rather than as a temporary project.

In the two programmes without a designated ministerial anchor, responsibilities were spread across ministries and administrative levels, responsibilities were spread across ministries and administrative levels with health, education, and social affairs departments all involved. However, few ministries translated CBR/CBID into core performance targets and routine reporting, so ownership and follow through varied. District officials acknowledged CBR/CBID as important but secondary to programmes linked to established sector budgets or national priorities.

Key insight

When CBR/CBID is clearly anchored within a ministry's mandate, officials are more likely to see it as part of their formal responsibility rather than as an external project.

Convening authority shaped government leadership

All three programmes invested heavily in coordination platforms — committees, referral systems, and joint planning meetings — to support delivery. In programmes A and B, NGOs continued to prepare agendas, chair discussions, and follow up decisions. As such, coordination authority remained dependent on NGO facilitation rather than embedded within a formal government hierarchy. In programme C, which had a designated lead ministry, officials started to chair meetings, issued instructions through formal hierarchies, and required reports from district staff. Coordination increasingly took place through formal government hierarchies rather than through NGO-led platforms.

Key insight

NGO-led coordination helped programmes function, but responsibility only shifted when government actors chaired meetings, issued instructions, and required follow-up through their own hierarchies.

Domestic resources functioned as a threshold

Programmes A and B remained fully donor-financed. Even officials who strongly supported disability inclusion tended to prioritise activities tied to domestic budgets. CBR/CBID tasks were postponed when competing, funded programmes arose.

Programme C secured limited but recurrent public inputs — staff time listed in workplans, transport allowances for supervision visits, and small operational costs. These amounts were modest, but their inclusion in sector planning documents changed internal discussions: CBR/CBID became something the ministry had committed to deliver, not just to support.

Key insight

Even small budget lines marked a shift from voluntary participation to institutional obligation.

Routine systems mattered more than formal commitments

The two programmes without a designated ministerial anchor produced policy frameworks, steering committees, and national strategies. These increased visibility and political support, but daily practice at district level changed little. Supervision visits did not include CBR/CBID checks, reporting formats remained unchanged, and staff continued to treat activities as project-driven.

Where CBR/CBID tasks were added to inspection schedules, referral registers, reporting templates, and district planning cycles, they proved more durable. Frontline workers continued applying screening tools and referral procedures because these actions had become part of standard government supervisory expectations.

Key insight

Changes in everyday government routines — such as inspection checklists, reporting templates, and planning cycles — proved more durable than policy statements or project platforms.

When institutional uptake stalls

Comparing the three programmes shows that institutional uptake does not follow a fixed sequence, but depends on how key conditions come together in practice. Programme C, which progressed furthest, combined four elements: a clear ministerial anchor, some domestic resources, authority to convene and supervise, and CBR/CBID embedded in routine planning and oversight. Where one or more of these elements were missing, progress stalled. Attempts to secure individual elements in isolation — for example, national budget commitments — proved difficult when CBR/CBID was not yet part of everyday government work within a responsible ministry. Officials were reluctant to allocate scarce resources to activities that were not yet part of their core responsibilities.

4.4 Using the Cameroon evidence for programme design

The recommendations below translate the cross-case findings into a small number of strategic levers that NGOs and donors were able to influence during implementation. Table 4.2 summarises what the Cameroon cases revealed about each lever and the operational steps that followed from those patterns, including how NGOs worked on official plans and budgets, professional roles, and what government staff came to treat as routine practice.

Table 4.2 Strategic levers for government uptake

Strategic levers during implementation	Strategic recommendation for NGOs	Operational steps inside government systems
Initial institutional anchor	Assign clear responsibility to one designated ministry before expanding across ministries.	<p>Rules, plans & budgets: Formalise the designated ministry’s coordination role in official plans and district workplans.</p> <p>Shared beliefs & habits: Frame CBR/CBID as part of the ministry’s core mandate, not a project add-on.</p>

Convening and supervisory authority	Transfer convening and supervision authority to government during implementation.	Rules, plans & budgets: Revise ToR to name ministry chairs and reporting lines. Professional norms & roles: Coach officials to issue formal follow-up instructions.
Domestic resource commitments	Pursue early, partial domestic financing for CBR/CBID activities.	Rules, plans & budgets: Insert CBR/CBID lines into sector and district budgets. Professional norms & roles: Support planners to routinely include CBR/CBID costs in annual budget submissions.
Embedding in government routines	Integrate CBR/CBID into government planning, supervision, and reporting systems.	Rules, plans & budgets: Revise reporting templates and inspection checklists. Professional norms & roles: Brief inspectors on inclusion criteria and performance expectations.
Sequencing	Establish a designated ministry first, then expand coordination across ministries.	Rules, plans & budgets: Define when expansion to other ministries should occur and record this in partnership agreements. Shared beliefs & habits: Agree and communicate that expansion to other ministries follows institutional uptake.

The Cameroon cases show that institutionalisation during implementation did not happen by chance. It followed a pattern. Securing a clear ministerial anchor created the basis for further shifts: domestic budget lines, formal supervisory authority, and the gradual integration of CBR/CBID into routine planning and reporting systems. Where this anchor was absent, other efforts — such as coordination platforms or policy frameworks — improved collaboration but did not lead to the same transfer of formal responsibility. For NGOs and donors, this points to a practical conclusion: institutional uptake is more likely when responsibility is first clearly located within one ministry and then reinforced step by step through budgets, authority, and routines. These findings do not guarantee sustainability after exit, but they clarify which strategic levers NGOs and donors can deliberately use — from programme design onward — to move CBR/CBID responsibilities from project space into formal government systems.

5. What Participatory Reviews Reveal about CBR/CBID Sustainability

Evidence from Rwanda

Authors: *Jospeh Muyandamutsa, Willem Elbers & Luuk van Kempen*

5.1 Introduction

CBR/CBID programmes often deliver strong results while donor funding is in place. Yet whether these activities will continue once external support declines is frequently unclear. Bringing government officials, NGOs, frontline workers, community members, persons with disabilities and their families together can help surface sustainability challenges.

This chapter examines a case from Rwanda in which a participatory sustainability tool, the CBR/CBID Sustainability Enhancement Tool (CBR/CBID-SET), was piloted within an ongoing programme.⁴ It asks:

*What did this pilot reveal about sustainability challenges, and what does this imply for NGOs' use of participatory reviews during implementation?*⁵

The chapter focuses on three elements: what participants identified about the programme's sustainability, what the participatory process itself added, and what this suggests for NGO practice when designing, managing, evaluating, expanding or exiting CBR/CBID programmes.

5.2 The Rwanda pilot with the CBR/CBID-SET

The pilot of the CBR/CBID-SET tool took place mid-cycle and was not designed as a formal external evaluation. Instead, it created an opportunity for joint reflection on whether core programme functions were likely to continue if donor support declined. The pilot was organised by the main author together with the implementing NGO and was the first full test of the tool in practice.

The CBR/CBID-SET in brief

CBR/CBID-SET focuses on sustainability conditions rather than short-term outputs. It invites participants to assess the four foundational sustainability pillars identified in the literature review:

- Community Engagement (participation, ownership, legitimacy, decision-making influence)
- Financial sustainability (donor dependence, transition planning, affordability)
- Policy integration (government mandates, budgets, sectoral integration)
- Operational capacity (staffing, systems, routines)

In four facilitated workshops across four locales, mixed stakeholder groups discussed concrete prompts linked to each sustainability pillar — such as who authorises expenditure, how

⁴ The CBR/CBID SET tool can be downloaded from the [Liliane Fonds resource hub](#)

⁵ The academic study on which this chapter is based is: Munyandamutsa J., Van Kempen L., Elbers W., Sagahutu J. (forthcoming). Towards a Sustainability Tool for Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) Programmes: A Pilot among Stakeholders in Rwanda

government leads and coordinates CBR/CBID, how community ownership is formally recognised, and which activities would continue without programme support. Besides discussing the pillars, groups collectively scored each pillar to assess the programme's sustainability. These scores were used to highlight areas of relative strength and vulnerability and to stimulate discussion about priorities for action.

Who participated — and why that mattered

Workshops deliberately brought together national and district officials, frontline workers, NGO staff, community representatives, persons with disabilities and their families. This diversity was central to the design: sustainability questions often look different depending on where actors sit in the system. Bringing these perspectives together allowed participants to compare assumptions, surface blind spots, and debate where authority and responsibility actually lay. Separate interviews and surveys conducted after the workshops captured participants' reflections on both the process and the tool itself. These data complement the workshop discussions.

5.3 What participants identified about sustainability

Across workshops and focus groups, participants converged on CBR/CBID sustainability challenges across the four sustainability pillars — financing, policy integration, operational capacity, and community engagement. The Rwanda pilot confirmed that these factors mattered locally, but the participatory review made especially clear where arrangements remained underdeveloped and constrained transition into government systems. The subsections below focus on the sustainability dynamics most relevant in Rwanda.

Unavailability of CBR/CBID budget line and missing transition planning

Discussions about financing quickly revealed large information gaps. District officials, frontline workers, and community representatives often did not know whether CBR/CBID activities appeared in government budgets, which ministry lines covered supervision or transport, or whether domestic resources had been earmarked to replace donor funding. Participants described programme-funded activities in detail but struggled to identify plans for absorbing them into public systems. Few referred to written transition strategies, agreed timelines, or co-financing arrangements. Several interviewees described the lack of financial clarity as the programme's most serious vulnerability: information about budgets and plans for taking over costs had not yet been widely embedded within government systems. As a result, although activities were operating during the programme period, responsibility for financing them beyond donor support remained unclear. Without explicit local budget allocation, it was argued, continuation depended largely on external funding rather than on established government commitments.

Key insight

Sustainability risks were closely associated to the absence of visible domestic financing pathways — even while delivery systems functioned well under donor funding.

Fragmented mandates and uneven sector engagement

Policy discussions revealed similar disconnects across levels and ministries. National actors referred to disability strategies and coordination frameworks that district officials and community representatives said they rarely encountered in daily work. Frontline workers were uncertain whether CBR/CBID responsibilities featured in job descriptions, supervision tools, or reporting lines. Education-related concerns — school enrolment, accessibility, and teacher capacity — surfaced repeatedly in discussions with parents and local officials. These were often described as less embedded than activities in health or social affairs, highlighting uneven engagement within the dimensions of the CBR/CBID matrix. Taken together, these findings pointed to a single institutional problem: CBR/CBID responsibilities are spread across multiple ministries, but few officials experienced them as firmly anchored within their own operational mandates. As a result, responsibility remained dispersed, and no single authority consistently exercised supervisory control over implementation.

Key insight

Formal participation of multiple ministries did not ensure that CBR/CBID responsibilities were integrated into routine mandates, supervision systems, or daily administrative practice.

Persistent external project logics

Although the programme was framed as a long-term programme and involved active government participation, core coordination, reporting, and financing arrangements remained closely tied to donor-funded project systems. NGO staff and government counterparts frequently described CBR/CBID activities through the language of project cycles, donor reporting, and externally facilitated platforms. Trainings, outreach, and coordination meetings were widely seen as dependent on NGO facilitation and project budgets — even when government officials were actively involved. Participants also identified organisational vulnerabilities that reinforced this pattern: reliance on a small number of committed individuals, limited documentation of procedures, and uncertainty about who would convene coordination meetings once NGO staff would no longer be available. Several interviewees referred to earlier experiences in which services had weakened after programmes closed. These observations reflected how far CBR/CBID delivery still relied on NGO-driven activities rather than government systems.

Key insight

Despite strong government engagement and improved tool alignment, coordination, financing, and reporting remained largely dependent on external project arrangements.

Participation without formal decision authority

Community representatives and parents described active involvement in CBR/CBID activities and valued opportunities to raise concerns about service gaps, stigma, schooling, and access to assistive devices. At the same time, the Rwanda pilot revealed structural limits in how government systems absorbed these perspectives. Budget preparation, sector planning, and technical prioritisation remained concentrated at the district level, and community inputs rarely flowed through mandated channels into official plans or budget submissions. The result was a CBR/CBID arrangement in which participation improved local responsiveness but had limited

leverage over the public systems that ultimately determine continuity. The participatory review made this disconnect explicit by bringing community representatives and district officials together to explore how CBR/CBID could be integrated into Rwanda's performance contracts ("Imihigo") and access public financing.

Key insight

Even as CBR/CBID activities were increasingly implemented through government personnel and existing service schemes, they were not yet anchored in formal ministry planning and budget allocations. As a result, their continuation remained dependent on arrangements outside routine public systems.

Participant-generated priorities

Building upon the identified sustainability challenges, workshop groups formulated forward-looking proposals. Across stakeholder categories, participants called for:

- earlier sustainability discussions in project cycles;
- greater transparency about government budget commitments;
- clearer designation of coordination authority inside public systems;
- gradual co-financing and handover arrangements;
- repeating the diagnostic exercise over time to track whether responsibilities were genuinely shifting.

5.4 What the participatory review added

Across workshops, focus groups, and interviews, participants described the CBR/CBID-SET process as unusually open and generative. Its principal contribution lay less in the numerical scores used to rate programme performance across core sustainability pillars than in the structured discussions it enabled among community members, frontline workers, NGO staff, and government officials. These exchanges created space for institutional questions that are often marginal in routine monitoring processes, and for testing assumptions about sustainability while programmes were still ongoing.

Creating an early warning moment

The review brought long-term sustainability issues onto the agenda before donor withdrawal became imminent. Financing responsibilities, who should lead CBR/CBID coordination structures, and post-programme scenarios became objects of collective reflection rather than deferred to later stages. Several officials said the workshops clarified what sustainability meant for their roles, while NGO staff reported that the process challenged optimistic assumptions about transition readiness and prompted them to integrate CBR/CBID-SET into routine practice. The pilot thus functioned as a diagnostic exercise, surfacing vulnerabilities that had not previously been articulated in shared fora.

Exposing blind spots across the system

Participants highlighted the value of engaging actors who rarely interacted directly. District officials became aware that national strategies were often poorly known in the community; NGO staff heard parents' accounts of service gaps; frontline workers gained insight into budgeting and planning processes beyond their immediate remit. For parents and persons with disabilities, the format created rare opportunities to address officials directly. These exchanges

exposed differences in how responsibilities, authority, and information flows were understood across the system.

Shifting attention toward institutional constraints

The structured prompts redirected discussion away from service delivery toward mandates, budgeting authority, supervision arrangements, and exit planning. Apparently straightforward questions frequently generated extended debate. This affirmed the necessity of the Ministry of Local Government, through the National Council of Persons with Disabilities, to take the lead in coordinating and managing CBR/CBID programmes in Rwanda. Negotiating scores in in groups combining community members, frontline workers, NGO staff, and government officials brought gaps in knowledge to the surface and made differing interpretations of progress explicit.

Generating shared problem definitions

Beyond diagnosis, the process enabled participants to articulate collective views about where sustainability risks were concentrated. Across stakeholder groups, discussions converged on the need for earlier sustainability planning, clearer government leadership of coordination systems, greater transparency regarding government budget commitments, and gradual transition arrangements. While these did not resolve underlying structural constraints, they produced a shared vocabulary for discussing institutional risk and transition across organisational boundaries.

5.5 Limits and constraints of the participatory review

Although participants valued the Rwanda exercise highly, the pilot also exposed limits to what a participatory sustainability review could achieve during programme implementation. These constraints did not undermine the relevance of the issues raised, but shaped the extent to which the process could influence formal decision-making.

Hierarchy and deliberation

Workshop discussions reflected existing administrative hierarchies. National officials often spoke first on policy and finance, establishing reference points that others were hesitant to challenge. Younger participants and some community representatives reported lower confidence in intervening, particularly when technical language dominated exchanges. While facilitation strategies sometimes mitigated these patterns, the discussions nonetheless revealed how authority relations continued to structure deliberation even within deliberately inclusive formats.

Accessibility and participation

The pilot surfaced practical barriers to full participation. Some participants struggled with dense written materials, numerical scoring systems, or time constraints. Persons with visual impairments requested audio or large-print formats, while others suggested simplified or colour-based and digital scoring approaches. These experiences highlighted how participatory tools, if not carefully adapted, can differentially shape who is able to engage and how perspectives are expressed.

Institutional timing and decision cycles

Participants repeatedly noted that several of the weaknesses identified—particularly those related to budgets, mandates, and sectoral responsibilities—could not be resolved quickly. Formal changes to budget lines, job descriptions, or ministerial directives were described as slow and contingent on planning cycles and political approval processes. The review thus illuminated a temporal mismatch between the pace of participatory diagnosis and the slower rhythms of institutional change.

5.6 Implications for practice

Table 4.1 distils the chapter’s key recommendations and limits for using CBR/CBID-SET

Table 4.1 Core Recommendations for NGOs Using the CBR/CBID-SET

Core principle	Description
Timing the review strategically within the programme cycle	Use the CBR/CBID-SET during implementation rather than only at exit to surface risks around financing, mandates, coordination authority, and post-donor arrangements while there is still scope to prepare gradual transitions.
Convene actors across ministries and administrative levels	Include community representatives, frontline workers, NGO staff, and officials from multiple ministries and government tiers rather than only routine programme counterparts.
Invest in facilitation that actively manages hierarchy	Use skilled facilitation, and explicit invitations to dissent to prevent senior officials or technical language from dominating.
Design for accessibility from the outset	Adapt materials, scoring methods, and pacing to ensure meaningful participation by persons with all types of disabilities and community members.
Align the exercise with formal planning and budgeting cycles	Schedule reviews so findings can feed into government planning windows and sector reviews rather than falling outside decision moments.
Plan for repetition rather than one-off use	Budget for multiple rounds to track whether responsibilities and financing are shifting from project routines into public systems.
Frame the exercise realistically given early design constraints	Recognise that mandates, financing, and coordination arrangements are often hard to reverse once programmes are underway

6. Recurring patterns shaping the institutionalisation of CBR/CBID

Research Synthesis

Author: Willem Elbers

6.1 Introduction

This synthesis chapter draws together the findings of the study and places particular emphasis on policy integration — understood here as institutionalisation: the embedding of CBR/CBID responsibilities, authority, and financing within durable government systems rather than externally supported projects. This focus reflects where the evidence in this report is most analytically developed and where the study offers its clearest contribution. The analysis concentrates on institutional embedding during implementation, rather than on long-term post-exit sustainability. This chapter asks the following question: *Across the evidence in this report, what most consistently shapes whether CBR/CBID programmes become embedded in government systems?*

Across the findings, three recurring patterns become visible (see Table 6.1). Although observed in different forms across contexts, they consistently shaped whether CBR/CBID responsibilities and financing moved into government systems or remained project-bound.

Table 6.1 Three recurring patterns shaping whether CBR/CBID moves beyond projects

Overarching pattern	What this looks like in practice
Programmes are accountable to donors—not to public systems	Donor-funded coordination, reporting, and budgets remain central, keeping accountability external and slowing the shift of authority, financing, and routines into government systems.
Programmes are designed to deliver results—not to continue	CBR/CBID operates to deliver results across multiple dimensions, but embedding fails when responsibility is spread across ministries without a clear lead; mandates, budgets, and routines remain fragmented.
Government actors are involved—but not made responsible	Initial choices of lead ministry, administrative level, and coordination structure shape ownership, financing, and routines and are difficult to reverse later.

6.2 Programmes are accountable to donors—not to public systems

Across the country cases and survey, a recurring pattern is that CBR/CBID often remains organised through externally funded project systems — even when government actors are involved. NGO-led coordination, donor reporting requirements, and project-based budgets continue to structure daily work, meaning that supervision, financing, and accountability remain tied to project arrangements rather than to public systems. This reflects more than funding shortages. External financing brings external accountability requirements that shape where authority and responsibility sit. When core functions remain financed and reported through project systems, responsibility remains project-bound. Where even modest domestic budget

allocations were introduced, visible shifts occurred: once CBR/CBID appeared in government plans and budgets, ministries were more likely to treat it as part of their mandate.

Why this matters for practice

Where financing and accountability sit determines where authority resides. Moving beyond projects therefore requires deliberate steps to shift financing, reporting, and operational authority into government or other long-term institutions over time.

6.2 Programmes are designed to deliver results—not to continue

The evidence in this report shows a recurring institutional challenge: embedding CBR/CBID depends on how responsibilities are organised within government. Because CBR/CBID is inherently multi-dimensional, programmes often engage multiple ministries from the outset. Multi-dimensional design pulls towards breadth of ministerial involvement, but institutionalisation requires depth of institutional anchoring. When no single ministry is clearly responsible, it becomes difficult to secure mandates, budgets, and routines, and responsibilities remain weakly embedded. Participation and consultation alone do not create ownership or authority. This does not argue against a holistic approach. It shows that effective embedding depends on establishing a clear anchor in one lead ministry, from which coordination with others can be developed.

Why this matters for practice

Rather than engaging all relevant ministries from the outset, establish a clear institutional anchor in one lead ministry first and build coordination from there. Which ministry can best play this role depends on the context, but requires alignment with existing mandates and sufficient institutional and political traction for responsibilities to become embedded.

6.3 Government actors are involved—but not made responsible

The initial institutional entry point of CBR/CBID has lasting consequences for how responsibilities, budgets, and authority evolve. Early choices about how CBR/CBID programmes engage the government often set a path that is difficult to change later. In Cameroon and Zambia, programmes that worked closely with a specific ministry or district authority from the start made more progress toward routine oversight and public budgeting than programmes that spread responsibility across many actors. When CBR/CBID operated through NGO-led coordination or parallel systems, these arrangements often became the default way of working. By contrast, early engagement with government planning and budgeting structures made later transitions toward more durable arrangements easier.

Why this matters for practice

Sustainability pathways are shaped less by end-of-programme strategies than by early institutional positioning. The critical decision is not only how to exit, but where and through whom CBR/CBID is introduced. Early positioning decisions shape the trajectory of institutionalisation and are difficult to reverse later.

7. From evidence to action

Roles & responsibilities to sustain CBR/CBID

Author: Willem Elbers

7.1 Introduction

This chapter turns the research findings into practical guidance for organisations working on CBR/CBID — including OPDs and community groups, NGOs, government officials, and donors. It focuses on the strategic choices that most strongly influence whether CBR/CBID becomes sustainable in practice.

Sustainability has several pillars. In this report, however, the strongest evidence concerns what Chapter 1 described as policy integration — the process through which CBR/CBID responsibilities becomes institutionalised in government mandates, budgets, and everyday administrative routines. The recommendations below therefore focus on the practical design choices that influence whether this institutionalisation takes place.

The relevance of these recommendations depends on context. As the box below explains, factors such as decentralisation, budget authority, and the strength of public systems influence what is feasible.

How widely do these findings apply?

How CBR/CBID becomes embedded depends on national and local contexts. Factors such as the degree of decentralisation, where budget authority sits, and the strength of governmental services shape what is feasible. In fragile or conflict-affected settings, where state institutions are weak or unstable, absorption into government systems may be slower, partial, or uneven. Highly centralised systems can also create different bottlenecks, especially where space for civil-society engagement is limited. The five recommendations described in this report should therefore not be read as universal rules, but as strategic principles that require adaptation to local realities.

7.2 Design for sustainability

CBR/CBID programmes often rely on NGO-led coordination, reporting systems, and project platforms in their early phases. The strategic question is whether these arrangements remain the default or are deliberately transferred into governmental units that will outlast the project. Where financing and accountability sit determines where operational authority resides. As long as core functions remain embedded in externally funded project systems, authority remains there. This helps explain why institutionalisation efforts often stall: responsibility may shift formally, but authority remains externally anchored.

Across the cases, programmes that deliberately transferred convening, supervision, and reporting to government units or long-term local organisations showed stronger institutional uptake and were less dependent on project platforms at closure. Where this did not happen, institutional transfer remained limited. In constrained settings, transfers may be gradual, but postponing them risks entrenching parallel systems that are difficult to unwind.

What actors can do

- **OPDs & community organisations:** prioritise participation in government-chaired coordination forums rather than project committees.
- **INGOs & NGOs:** plan authority transfer from inception and progressively shift convening, supervision, and reporting into public or long-term local organisations.
- **Governments:** assign staff time and formal mandates to coordination functions and absorb project platforms into standing committees.
- **Donors:** adapt contracting and reporting requirements so coordination and reporting functions can shift into public systems before projects close.

Decision check

- Who currently convenes coordination meetings and supervises frontline staff?
- Which organisation or unit controls reporting systems and performance reviews?
- Is there a documented plan or timetable for transferring these functions?
- In which forums do OPDs participate most regularly: project-run or government-chaired?

7.2. Shift accountability to a lead ministry

Every CBR/CBID programme eventually faces a decisive question: which institution will formally “own” CBR/CBID once project funding ends? Without a clearly mandated lead government body — a ministry, district authority, service agency etc. — responsibilities diffuse, budget negotiations stall, and NGOs continue coordinating by default. This leadership role is not simply about partnership: it means locating authority to convene actors, integrate CBR/CBID into formal mandates, integrate CBR/CBID into formal mandates and represent it in planning and budgeting processes. In contrast, participation across ministries does not translate into ownership or authority.

Across the cases, CBR/CBID progressed furthest where one identifiable government unit held formal responsibility for convening and budget engagement; multi-ministerial committees and NGO platforms helped collaboration but rarely substituted for such clear government leadership. Where such a lead government body can most realistically be established depends on how authority and budgets are distributed within a system. In practice, anchoring proved more effective when responsibility was located in a unit with formal influence over planning and resource allocation.

What actors can do

- **OPDs & community organisations:** engage the designated lead government body consistently and track whether commitments appear in district plans and budgets.
- **INGOs & NGOs:** identify the intended long-term lead government body early and route coordination through that body rather than parallel platforms.
- **Governments:** designate a lead unit, embed CBR/CBID responsibilities in ministry plans and job descriptions, and authorise budget negotiations.
- **Donors:** support early engagement with the designated lead government body, allow time for institutional anchoring, and link continued financing to progress on clear government leadership and formal designation of responsibility.

Met opmerkingen [JA1]: For Oranje Boven: these actors come back in the summary visual and for each of the key recommendations. Consider use of symbols and/or coherent use of colors for each action

Decision check

- At which level(s) of government (national, provincial, district) can formal responsibility for CBR/CBID realistically be exercised?
- Have we clearly identified one ministry or government body at that level to serve as the (initial) lead for CBR/CBID?
- Is this lead ministry or body visibly positioned to chair coordination and represent CBR/CBID in planning and budget discussions from the outset?
- Are we avoiding parallel project structures that would unintentionally position the NGO as the real coordinator?

7.4 Build institutional responsibility

Because CBR/CBID spans multiple domains governed by different ministries (e.g. health, education), programmes often seek to engage several ministries from the outset. Multi-dimensional design pulls towards breadth of ministerial involvement, but institutionalisation requires depth of institutional anchoring. The evidence from Zambia and Cameroon shows that institutionalisation progressed furthest where responsibility and routine practice were first consolidated within one institutional base before expanding coordination more widely. Where programmes attempted to embed CBR/CBID across several ministries before a foothold had taken hold, progress was slower and coordination remained project-dependent.

In practice, this means reversing the usual approach: rather than starting with breadth and trying to build depth, programmes need to establish depth in one ministry or authority first, and expand coordination from there (width).

What actors can do

- **OPDs & community organisations:** focus advocacy and participation in the first ministry or district where CBR/CBID responsibility is being institutionalised, before expanding engagement elsewhere
- **INGOs & NGOs:** design phased scale-up plans that first consolidate CBR/CBID within one ministry or district — ensuring it enters annual plans, supervision systems, and reporting structures — before expanding to additional ministries or districts.
- **Governments:** identify one ministry or administrative level for initial consolidation and confirm that CBR/CBID functions are embedded within routine systems before broadening cross-sector coordination.
- **Donors:** support gradual, phased expansion and reward demonstrated institutional consolidation in one location rather than rapid roll-out across multiple ministries or districts.

Decision check

- Are we trying to institutionalise CBR/CBID across several ministries or districts at the same time?
- In the initial ministry or district where responsibility is located, has CBR/CBID entered routine government systems (annual plans, supervision, reporting)?
- Are government officials exercising responsibility without relying on project staff to coordinate?

- Is expansion to additional ministries or districts explicitly linked to demonstrated institutional consolidation in the first location?

7.5 Shift core financing into public systems

Financing arrangements determine whether CBR/CBID remains a programme or becomes a public responsibility. Across the cases, institutionalisation progressed only when core functions — coordination, supervision, frontline delivery, and community engagement — began to shift from donor funding into recognised public systems. For this reason, these functions need to be progressively financed through public systems if institutionalisation is to take place. The clearest signal of institutionalisation is a dedicated and recurrent public budget. However, integration into public systems can also begin through formally recognised staff time, use of existing government subsidy schemes, and other public contributions.

What matters is not only that these contributions exist, but that they appear in official plans, budgets, and reporting systems. Programmes should therefore identify which functions remain fully externally financed, document public and community contributions, and gradually move these into recurrent public financing. When core functions remain fully project-financed, CBR/CBID continues to depend on external funding cycles rather than becoming a stable public responsibility. As long as core functions remain financed through project systems, they remain project responsibilities. Even modest but formally recognised public contributions can mark an important step toward institutionalisation — especially when they become part of routine planning and budgeting cycles.

What actors can do

- **OPDs & community organisations:** document participation and coordination costs and advocate for these to be included in public budgets rather than relying on unpaid or project-funded engagement.
- **INGOs & NGOs:** map which core CBR/CBID functions remain project-funded and design phased plans for shifting these costs into public or organisational budgets.
- **Governments:** introduce or pilot dedicated CBR/CBID budget lines and progressively integrate core programme costs into recurrent public financing.
- **Donors:** finance transition periods and reward early domestic financial contributions rather than only rapid service expansion.

Decision check

- Which CBR/CBID functions are still fully externally financed?
- Which costs are currently covered by governmental budgets?
- Has the share of domestic financing changed over time?
- Who currently covers participation and coordination costs for OPDs and volunteers?

7.6 Hard-wire CBR/CBID into routine practice

CBR/CBID becomes durable only when it is built into routine administrative practice — annual plans, supervision systems, job descriptions, training curricula, reporting templates, and regular review meetings. The strategic choice is whether CBR/CBID remains an add-on project or is incorporated into how institutions normally operate. Routine systems determine what is monitored and prioritised. When CBR/CBID is absent from these systems, it depends on

individual champions or project momentum. When integrated into official plans, supervision tools, and staff responsibilities, it becomes part of institutional expectations rather than discretionary effort.

Across the cases, formal policy commitments often outpaced changes in everyday practice. Activities continued through project tools and NGO reporting formats even after policies were adopted. By contrast, where CBR/CBID entered district plans, inspection checklists, staff roles, and routine meetings, it proved more resilient to staff turnover and funding shifts. OPDs also sustained influence more effectively when linked to standing planning and review forums rather than project committees. Institutionalisation therefore depends not only on political commitment or financing, but on whether inclusion is embedded in the everyday systems through which government operates.

What actors can do

- **OPDs & community organisations:** press for inclusion in standing planning and review forums and track whether commitments appear in annual plans.
- **INGOs & NGOs:** redesign tools and reporting to mirror government systems and avoid parallel routines.
- **Governments:** embed CBR/CBID in annual planning and supervision systems and update job descriptions and training packages.
- **Donors:** accept government reporting formats where feasible and fund administrative integration rather than only service delivery.
- **Frontline services:** integrate CBR/CBID into daily workflows and engage OPDs through routine channels.

Decision check

- In whose routine systems does CBR/CBID currently appear (plans, supervision tools, training, job descriptions)?
- Are these routines authorised within government systems, or do they still rely on project arrangements?
- How dependent are day-to-day practices on project staff or funding?
- In whose standing planning or review forums do OPDs participate?

From strategic choices to institutional futures

The five recommendations above concern core institutional design decisions: where responsibility is located, how authority and financing shift, and how routines are embedded. Table 7.1 below translates these design choices into five plausible institutional futures. These are not predictions, but trajectories inferred from the evidence. They illustrate how current design and positioning decisions influence whether CBR/CBID becomes embedded within government systems, remains partially embedded, or reverts to project dependence once external funding changes or ends.

Table 7.1 How strategic choices shape institutionalisation trajectories

Scenario	Lead	Financing	Operational authority	Routine systems	Design choices that lead here
Programme collapse after exit	None designated	Fully donor-funded	NGO-led until exit	Project tools dominate	No designated lead government body; no authority transfer; no domestic financing;

NGO-led continuation	NGO de facto lead	Donors	NGO-led	Parallel systems persist	not embedded in official plans or job roles. Lead government body absent or symbolic; coordination and reporting remain project-managed; donor financing dominant; limited integration into public systems.
Hybrid co-financing transition	Shared NGO-government	Partial alignment with government systems	Mixed	Partial alignment	Lead identified but authority and financing only partially transferred; selected functions embedded; project and government systems run in parallel.
Lead-ministry anchored government uptake	One lead ministry or district	Recurrent sector budgets	Government-led	Embedded in lead-ministry routines	Designated lead ministry with consolidated authority and recurrent sector financing; coordination transferred; embedded in ministry planning and supervision; phased expansion to other ministries.
System-wide government integration	Central or coordinating ministry	Multi-ministry public budgets	Government-led	Integrated across systems	Cross-government leadership consolidated; multi-ministry public budgets institutionalised; authority aligned across ministries; embedded across planning and supervision systems.

Looking ahead: planning for institutional futures

The evidence across cases points to a consistent conclusion: disability inclusion endures when public systems assume responsibility for it. The scenarios above invite programme teams, governments, donors, and OPDs to think strategically about the institutional pathways they are shaping. Sustainability is not binary, nor is it automatic. It develops where institutional responsibility is clarified early, where authority and budgets are progressively consolidated, and where inclusion becomes part of everyday governance. Designing for these conditions from the

outset increases the likelihood that CBR/CBID will outlast projects and contribute to durable, system-level inclusion.

Our next Inclusion insights – community engagement

Have you been inspired by this edition of Inclusion Insight about CBR/CBID and sustainability? Would you like to learn more how to advance your community based disability inclusion interventions based on rigorous research evidence?

Where this report focussed on institutionalisation through government the Next Breaking Down Barriers research cycle and Inclusion Insights publication will focus on the heart CBR/CBID; effectively working with communities. The next publication will unpack evidence relevant for practice around the following question:

Under what community conditions do CBR/CBID community engagement strategies succeed, or fail, in achieving lasting changes in how people treat and include children and youth with disabilities?

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