Towards Disability
Inclusive Sustainable Livelihoods
People with disabilities face widespread exclusion from livelihood opportunities in many settings. While there is clear evidence from high-income countries of a gap in the employment rate between people with and without disabilities - equivalent analyses from low-to-middle income countries (LMICs) are more challenging given the complexity of livelihood situations in many of these settings. In the LMICs, 80% to 90% of people with disabilities of working age are unemployed, whereas in the high-income countries the figure is between 50% and 70%. The minority that have jobs often have employment that is unsafe or poorly paid, which leaves people with disabilities lacking any form of social security. As there is a clear link between disability and poverty, these unemployment rates make people with disabilities more vulnerable.

Livelihood can be defined as the means through which individuals or households are able to meet their basic needs. It encompasses not only remunerated labour, but also individual capabilities (e.g. level of education, skills), assets and participation in other productive activities (e.g. farming for direct consumption). People with disabilities have the same rights as any other people to meet their basic human needs, to enjoy an adequate standard of living and decent work in which they will develop as people and professionals. They also have the right to contribute to the wellbeing of their families and the sustainable development of their communities.

The Liliane Foundation believes that Inclusion of youngsters and their caregivers can only be achieved through an approach that involves them in the whole process, from the design of the interventions to the evaluations of the outcomes. The Liliane Foundation promotes inclusive societies in which the attitudinal, infrastructural and policy barriers that prevent economic empowerment of youngsters with disabilities are diminished. The Liliane Foundation achieves this in close partnership with the (strategic) partner organizations, which play an
invaluable role in developing relationships with local and national governments, schools, training institutes, employers and companies, and other important stakeholders in society. Aiming at maximum economic participation of the youngster within the family, the community and society as a whole, the Liliane Foundation considers a sustainable livelihood as an important and inevitable aspect of disability-inclusive development.

This paper presents the vision and position of the Liliane Foundation with regard to livelihood, and has been written for the international development community, government officials and civil society organizations both in the Netherlands and the global South. This vision and position are based on literature research, and lessons, experiences and insights the Liliane Foundation and its partners have acquired through the years. With this paper, the Liliane Foundation invites organizations, civil society and decision makers to promote and practice the economic inclusion of youngsters with disabilities. In this position paper, the Liliane Foundation identifies and discusses four focus area that contribute to sustainable livelihoods namely: (1) skills development and training, (2) self-employment, (3) waged employment and (4) social protection. These areas are not exhaustive and the Liliane Foundation, through its practice, will learn and incorporate new insights in the coming years, based on its planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning cycle.

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Facts and figures

A key component for sustainable livelihoods is engagement in decent work: work that is stable, that respects an individual’s dignity, provides safe conditions and has fair remuneration. It is illustrative that in many countries, people with disabilities are not even registered as job seekers, but are instead classified in labour market terms as inactive.

It is important to recognize that people with disabilities are not a homogenous group. Therefore, the intersectional approach can be used to understand the diversities that exist among them. Intersectionality is defined as interaction between different factors such as gender, race, age, disability, ethnicity and other categories of social difference in individual lives and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. Based on people’s different intersecting identities, they have different experiences, strengths and agencies that need to be understood, utilized and built upon for effective and sustainable results in projects and programmes.

Often, people with physical impairments face fewer problems of social and economic exclusion than people with visual or hearing impairments. Adolescent girls with disabilities, and people with an intellectual or psychosocial impairment, face deeper disadvantages in the labour market. They are three to four times less likely to be employed then people without disabilities. Likewise, for people with multiple disabilities it is more difficult to be employed then for people with a single disability.

Youngsters with disabilities face several barriers that contribute to their economic exclusion. Firstly, there is a lack of appropriate and affordable rehabilitation processes, and adequate assistive devices and technologies that should enable the youngsters to improve their activity levels. Often, the rehabilitation methods used are old fashioned and do not give positive results. The assistive devices delivered are often unsuited to the contextual environment in which youngsters live, and their use is obsolete.

Secondly, education is not always inclusive or of good quality, which leads to poor outcomes or exclusion from primary and secondary education, and to limited access to professional and vocational training. Out of the 46 million - 65 million primary and lower-secondary age children with disabilities in low-income and middle-income countries, one-quarter to half of this number are not in school. In Asia and the Pacific people with disabilities only represent 3.4% of the
participants in government-funded vocational trainings. The lack of access to education and training, including skills development, decreases the possibility of finding decent work.

Thirdly, negative attitudes from families and communities, such as overprotection or lack of belief in the potential of a child with disabilities, can have a negative effect on the level of his or her self-confidence. Youngsters with disabilities are confronted by employers who stereotype their capacities and productivity. Employers often lack awareness of the possibility to employ people with disabilities. Some with certain awareness fear the high costs of adaptions in the workplace. Others, in countries where quotas exist, employ people with disabilities but usually in low paid positions, which prevents people with disabilities who are highly qualified from gaining opportunities for decent job.

Youngsters with disabilities also encounter accessibility issues, linked not only to technological aids, infrastructure, buildings and transportation, but also to access to information that is work related. Indeed, many youngsters with disabilities indicate that they are not aware of available livelihood and training opportunities. In addition, youngsters encounter difficulties in finding work due to a limited social network and a lack of support in seeking work, accessible job placements and job coaching.

Finally, youngsters with disabilities have limited access to financial services and start-up capital, which hinders their economic inclusion as most people with disabilities depend on self-employment. This is illustrated by a global survey among 50 microfinance providers, where only 0.5% of their total number of clients had a disability.

Policy and Legal Frameworks

There are a number of international legal frameworks that outline the rights of people with disabilities to earn a living and work in inclusive and enabling work environments.

First, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in its article 27 recognizes “the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities”. Further, article 28 also recognizes “the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”.

Secondly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pays significant attention to people with disabilities and maintains the principle of “leaving no one behind”. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 is to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. The reference to people with disabilities in SDG target 8.5 needs to
be reflected in countries’ employment policies. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) stipulates in its multi-annual strategy that “disability inclusion refers to promoting and ensuring the participation of people with disabilities in education, training and employment and all aspects of society and providing the necessary support and reasonable accommodation so that they can fully participate.”

The importance of sustainable livelihoods for youngsters with disabilities

Access to decent, productive and sustainable work opportunities is essential for people with disabilities. It increases their economic independence and enables them to earn a living for themselves and for their households. Further, sustainable livelihoods improve their self-confidence and recognition by others as they participate in economic activities on an equal basis with others. Livelihood concerns the ways in which people earn money to sustain themselves and their households. It can also, however, refer to productive, non-earning activities that are meaningful and bring self-esteem and recognition of others.

People with disabilities gain obvious advantage from economic inclusion, and other stakeholders such as households, families, communities, employers and even society at large also benefit from their inclusion.

“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base” (Chambers & Conway, 1991).

Households that include a person with disabilities have extra costs for medical care, assistive devices, personal support and transportation. Access to a sustainable livelihood will enable them to contribute to the disability related costs. Employers increasingly recognize the benefits of diverse workforces. And creating an environment that is supportive for people with disabilities also makes economic sense at a national level. Studies have revealed the high costs to national economies of keeping people with disabilities out of the workforce, for example due to the extra costs of social protection or the lost incomes by family members, usually women, who are unable to work due to their caretaker role. The ILO has come to the conclusion that economic losses related to disability are large and measurable, falling into a band between 3 and 7 percent of GDP.

The Liliane Foundation facilitates the inclusion of youngsters with disabilities in mainstream services, and at the same time empowers them through disability specific initiatives, which is referred to as the twin track approach to achieving disability inclusion.

The Liliane Foundation aims for youngsters with disabilities to gain a sustainable livelihood, to have access to social protection measures, and to obtain decent work and income. With this income they should be able to contribute economically to their families and communities and to meeting their disability related needs. The Liliane Foundation wants to achieve this by:

1. Working on the pre-conditions for sustainable livelihoods: rehabilitation to increase their activity levels, self-confidence and skills development;
2. Supporting youngsters and their caregivers to become more resilient, and enabling them to influence decision-making and to claim their rights; and
3. Supporting mainstream services such as vocational training institutes, workplaces, governmental institutions and financial institutions, to become more disability inclusive in their policies and practices.

The Liliane Foundation focuses on four areas which are described further in this chapter. These are: skills and expertise development, self-employment, formal sector work, and social protection.

For its livelihood programme, the Liliane Foundation targets youngsters with disabilities who have the capacity to build sustainable livelihoods and are of working age, depending on the specific country legislation. The Liliane Foundation encourages youngsters to develop skills and competencies in order to be better able to acquire assets and participate in diverse productive activities and increase their livelihood opportunities. Their active participation in these productive activities will raise recognition in the family and the community and will contribute to the youngsters’ self-confidence.

The Liliane Foundation recognizes that there is also a group of youngsters with severe or multiple disabilities that will not be able to develop a sustainable livelihood or contribute to economic activities. In these cases, the Liliane Foundation invests in daycare activities and livelihood interventions for their caregivers, so that they will become more self-reliant and economically self-sustaining.
The pre-conditions for developing a sustainable livelihood

Many youngsters with disabilities encounter various barriers that prevent them from achieving sustainable livelihoods. Often, they are not in a position to complete basic education and their potential and capacities are not always recognized by their families and communities. That leads to low self-esteem and self-confidence, which further lessen their motivation to seek employment or enterprise opportunities.

Increasing of self-confidence and self-esteem start with self-awareness and acceptance. The Liliane Foundation and its partners use a tailored approach to help youngsters to positively shape their self-image and fully accept themselves as human beings with dignity, capacities and unique talents. Further, the Liliane Foundation and its partners also sensitize caregivers on their crucial role in shaping a child’s concept of him or herself. The child empowerment programme of the Liliane Foundation addresses pre-conditions that are necessary before starting an economic activity. Depending on their situation, the youngsters may need rehabilitation services, assistive devices, psychological support and social inclusion programmes.

The identification of a sustainable livelihood for a youngster with a disability starts with a participatory functional and social assessment of the youngster and the caregivers, which is conducted by the local partner organization. Analysis of the job market (what is available and what is marketable) and of services available are necessary steps in the process. Based on the outcomes of both these assessments, a capacity development plan will be made, together with the youngster and his or her caregivers. The caregiver’s belief and support in the capacity of the youngster to become economically self-reliant is an important factor to success.

Skills development and training

Traditionally, when youngsters with disabilities have been offered vocational skills training, it has been in sheltered, segregated settings. These types of training are costly and not widely available. The training offered also do not often fit the job market, and there is little attention to the soft skills that are needed in a competitive job market. Skills taught are segregated by type of impairment, or based on stereotypes. Further, the vocational training centres that offer valuable training are not accessible for youngsters with disabilities, they lack assistive technologies and skills, and often they have negative attitudes to youngsters with disabilities being accepted in their programmes. Furthermore, the youngsters who are talented and committed to continue their high-level education, face many barriers in their quest to access universities such as inaccessible infrastructure, unadaptable learning tools and materials, and unskilled teachers and personnel.

CONGO – DIEU MERCI

Dieu Merci already loved working with lights and batteries when he was a small child. As he grew older, he developed more interest in electronics, and he is now following a university education despite the consequences of having polio that he experiences every day. He has already finished a successful internship at a radio station, and he hopes to find a job as soon as possible after his graduation.

PHOTO: JAN-JOSEPH STOK
In order to prepare youngsters for a successful transition from education (either vocational or university) to work and to increase their chances in the labour market (formal and informal), skills development and training are crucial. The Liliane Foundation supports mainstream vocational training centres and high-level educational institutions such as colleges and universities to become more inclusive, rather than supporting sheltered workshops that focus specifically on people with disabilities. The advantage of mainstream vocational training is that it is usually accredited, and that students will receive a certificate upon completion. Learning in a mainstream training centre with non-disabled people can also help to build the self-confidence and skills necessary for the workplace. In Rwanda, when students could not go to the centres, they were trained in their home villages by accredited trainers from the mainstream centres.

Inclusive vocational training goes beyond providing training to youngsters with and without disabilities at the same location. The training is inclusive if the educational and training providers are skilled and experienced, and have created an accessible learning environment, actively accommodating people with disabilities (access, facilities, technologies) and offering support to trainees so that all can succeed in their training. The training providers should use in-country resources to extend their knowledge of inclusive education, including curriculum differentiation and assessment strategies for a diversity of youngsters.

In Kenya, as part of the Employable programme, for example, the provision of sign language interpretation and training allowed youngsters with hearing impairment to be included in the mainstream Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme. Besides advising mainstream vocational training centres to work more inclusively, the Liliane Foundation also encourages the development of more informal training schemes such as apprenticeship systems, on-the-job training, peer training, and short training courses, as these might be more appropriate for part of the group of youngsters with disabilities.
ZIMBABWE

Pretty (19) learns how to grow food at school. She has grown her own vegetables in her garden at home, and with the income she gets from selling the harvest, she contributes to the income of her family household.

PHOTO: JAN-JOSEPH STOK

Employable is an initiative to promote the economic inclusion of youngsters with disabilities. The specific aim of this programme is to contribute to quality vocational training for these youngsters in Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia, and create lasting linkages between technical and vocational training institutes and the labour market, to structurally secure a decent income for themselves. The programme targets youngsters with disabilities, local training centers and private sector actors to achieve systemic change.

As part of the Employable project in Ethiopia, the Liliane Foundation has achieved great success with its partners on development of a national policy: the Guideline for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in TVET, which the implementing partners worked on together with the Federal TVET Agency. Two mainstream TVET colleges have learnt to include young people with disabilities in a range of courses including hairdressing, garment making and food processing.

The multi-stakeholder collaboration was a key to this success. The Liliane Foundation, Light for the World and its implementing partners worked on involving the local and national governments, through the Ministry of Education, the TVET colleges and ILO office. Each stakeholder had a specific role to play. The Ministry of Education, through its local offices and the schools, mobilized youngsters with disabilities and provided appropriate education for them to be able to enter in the TVET colleges. Further, the TVET colleges provided technical training, and the ILO office provided training to private companies on how to become more inclusive employers for these youngsters.
The Liliane Foundation aims to facilitate a successful transition from vocational and professional training to decent work. Therefore, solid assessment of the job market, facilitation of direct linkages between students and employers, facilitation of internships, sensitization and coaching of employers, and business coaching, are of utmost importance. Besides paying attention to technical skills, the Liliane Foundation also invests in developing soft skills and professional skills such as job seeking skills (how to succeed in interviews, how to write an application letter), networking skills, attitudes in the workplace, and learning how to work in a team. Mentoring after job-placement is crucial for a sustainable result and successful job outcome, and both youngsters and employers may need coaching and advice in this phase. Furthermore, in the Employable evaluation, it has been proven that the soft skills training improves the psycho-social state of youngsters with disabilities and is beneficial for their further financial stability.

**Self-employment**

In low income countries, the majority of people of working age need to create their own employment. This is even more the case for people with disabilities. In an already competitive labour market, they often experience resistance with employers to hire them. Hence, self-employment is an important option available to them. It is estimated that for each person with a disability employed by a company in low income countries, four more generate their own income through self-employment, most of them in the informal sector.

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People with disabilities regularly face difficulties in obtaining start-up capital for their businesses. Microfinance institutions are reluctant to target people with disabilities, as they perceive them as clients with a high risk of not paying back a loan. They are also reluctant to adapt their services and products to clients with specific needs, and lack the capacity to provide necessary support in this regard. On the other hand, youngsters with disabilities, especially those in rural areas, may lack access to appropriate information that would enable them to make use of mainstream services or join savings groups.

Successful self-employment requires initiative, motivation, determination and self-confidence, combined with specific technical knowledge and business skills. Self-esteem and confidence may be more of an issue for youngsters with disabilities and their caregivers than youngsters without disabilities, because of the isolation and prejudice associated with their disability, and this will in some cases act as a barrier to developing business ideas and seeking skills.

Coaching in business skills can best be provided by business owners with entrepreneurial experience and/or experience in the particular trade that the person wants to start in.

Appropriate funding mechanisms need to be identified to start a particular economic activity, adapted to the person and the activity he or she wants to start. Possible sources of such funding include savings, grants or ‘soft’ loans, by referring the youngster or his/her parents or caregivers to a bank, microfinance organization, or by joining local saving & credit groups.

The Liliane Foundation finds it particularly important to make mainstream financial services, such as micro-credit organizations, accessible for youngsters with disabilities. Referring only is not sufficient. The Liliane Foundation’s partners can play a crucial role in this through sensitization, advising, lobbying, linking and providing technical support to these microfinance organizations to make them more accessible for youngsters with disabilities.
It is important to reflect on the differences in the population of people with disabilities and their caregivers, who are individuals in the same way as people without disabilities, with different characteristics, abilities and talents. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is a key to success. Involving people with disabilities themselves, their caregivers, MFIs and local partner organizations, and enabling strong advocacy, communication and learning among them, can increase opportunities for more positive sustainable outcomes.

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In the Employable programme, self-employed youngsters reported that being employed and earning an income had enabled them to join or establish saving groups. This further created opportunities for these youngsters to improve their quality of life through additional access to finance. Gaining experience in managing finances is a skill that will last a lifetime.

The Liliane Foundation is clear that it does not fund loans, credit or revolving funds provided by partner organizations themselves, as these have proven to be unsustainable and difficult to manage. The Liliane Foundation can either provide guidance, or explore funding opportunities elsewhere. The Liliane Foundation can enter into a partnership with an organization that already works on giving loans and credit, and that functions as a micro-credit institution. The Liliane Foundation only provides grants for the start-up of economic activities when there is a high quality business plan and a contribution from the recipient.
Waged employment

It is especially difficult for people with disabilities to find decent work in the formal sector in low- and middle-income countries. They encounter prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination by employers, a lack of information about job opportunities, and a lack of physical accessibility or adapted technologies at work.

There is increasing awareness that disability inclusion in the workplace brings various benefits. A disability inclusive workplace has a positive effect on workforce morale, and a diverse workforce increases the chances of having more talented and innovative people on board. Also, people with disabilities show a good level of productivity related to low levels of absenteeism and job turnover. Furthermore, employers often find that reasonable workplace adjustments and supportive policies are less costly than initially thought and can also benefit workers without disabilities as they promote more inclusive work environments.

The benefits of employment for youngsters with disabilities are diverse and the impact can be wide. Youngsters with disabilities in various forms of employment reported that they had been able to pay for health insurance for their families (including one young person who paid for health insurance for 13 family members). Health insurance is a key factor in improving quality of life in countries where there is limited access to free health care.

In the district of Comas, Peru, the strategic partner of the Liliane Foundation, Fundades, has built strong expertise on inclusive labour by successfully developing Call Centres that act as social enterprises for youngsters with disabilities. The LABORA PCD project offers access to the labour market for people with disabilities through an inclusive process leading to direct employment in companies. The people with disabilities are provided with the necessary technical and professional skills by the Call Centre operator. The project also sensitizes public and private employers to their potential for hiring people with disabilities and creating more inclusive workplaces. The project also uses advocacy interventions to target government, businesses, civil society organizations and research institutions, monitors their level of disability inclusion, and helps them enforce appropriate measures to become more inclusive.

The director of Fundades, Mrs. Mary Zuniga emphasizes that “Fundades methodology goes further than the simple work of inclusion. Fundades works by providing technical abilities and skills for the employment of their students, sensitizing their collaborators and managers of the businesses for an adequate inclusion of youngsters with disabilities, creating ties of cooperation with the businesses and involving them in all the processes, and finally carrying out the accompaniment of their students in their jobs.”
The Liliane Foundation, together with its partners, develops the country programmes in line with the national legislation and context. Government services and other employers can be held accountable on aspects of this legislation, such as quota systems. The Liliane Foundation and its partners advocate to the government and employers to achieve full implementation of existing legislation, and/or lobby for new legislation that is beneficial for the promotion of disability inclusion at the workplace.

The Liliane Foundation facilitates waged employment by providing guidance in the transition from vocational training centres to full employment. The Liliane Foundation and its partners play an important role in linking students and employers, for example through facilitating employment placement services, career counselling, job markets and internships. Once a youngster is at the workplace, physical adaptations and further coaching might be required. The Liliane Foundation's partner organizations can be supportive in creating disability awareness among staff at the workplace and increasing understanding of specific needs of colleagues with disabilities. They can also facilitate in-house coaching.

Furthermore, the Liliane Foundation together with its partner organizations, stimulates youngsters to get involved and be included in attractive sectors, such as ICT, where job positions can be easily fitted for youngsters with diverse types of disabilities.

The Liliane Foundation and its partner organizations find it important to work on a disability inclusive environment within their own organizations and to recruit and employ people with disabilities.

ATRIEV (Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired), is the Liliane Foundation partner in the Philippines that is actively working on promoting and enabling youngsters with visual impairments to be trained in information technology and get a job as, for example, software analyst or computer trainer. Their projects are providing sustainable solutions for these youngsters who are able to find a suitable job and remain on a position for longer period of time.

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Salamatu Laggah, called Salay, contracted polio when she was 5 years old. People in her village in Sierra Leone thought she was a child of the devil. As a result, her parents abandoned her and she became homeless. A man who visited her village adopted her and enrolled her in school. Unfortunately, her adopting father died and she had to drop out from school. At 13 she became pregnant. The Liliane Foundation’s strategic partner in Sierra Leone, One Family People (OFP) supported Salay with coaching, life-skills training and schooling. She was enrolled in a course to become an office manager and she did her internship at OFP as a cashier and life-skills facilitator. After her successful internship, she was employed by OFP as a field officer. Her self-confidence was again rebuilt. She became a link between OFP and the communities this organization serves, making them more inclusive for people with disabilities. Moreover, Salay became an advisory board member of UNFPA. She is now living independently and taking care of her daughter, her parents, her sisters and three other youngsters with disabilities. Salay said “I am now an important decision maker in my family. Today I am seen as a real role model in society and an important contributor to development. In fact, I have won a National Child Empowerment Award in 2017. This was a great achievement for me as a young woman with a disability.”
Social protection

People with disabilities face more challenges in accessing social protection schemes. Only “28% of persons with severe disabilities globally receive disability benefits, with considerable variation between regions and countries”.[14] An important reason for this is that benefits are mostly based upon waged employment through contributory schemes, while most people with disabilities are working in self-employment. Another reason is that people with disabilities are often not sufficiently informed about existing support and how to access it.

Social protection measures intend to provide a safety net to protect people against poverty and loss of income. This is especially relevant for people with disabilities, who often belong among the most vulnerable groups and have higher expenditure on health, transportation and appliances. The importance of social protection is confirmed in the Employable programme in Kenya. Many of the youngsters who were registered by the government as people with disabilities could further access a social protection cash grant, training and tax exemption. [15] Furthermore, in Rwanda, people classified as being in the poorest category, which includes a lot of people with disabilities, are eligible for grants to attend university. As part of the same scheme, subsidized jobs are also provided to people in the poorest category.

Two types of social protection scheme can be distinguished, the official schemes and the informal schemes. The official schemes are implemented by governments and relate to poverty reduction and social assistance schemes such as food assistance, conditional cash transfer schemes, low-cost housing assistance, and unemployment assistance. Specific disability related costs (such as transport, adaptations to accommodation, free medicine, community health insurance, etc.) even if addressed, are often not implemented in low-income countries under these schemes. The informal schemes mostly apply to the group of people that are not working in the formal sector and thus rely on informal solutions. Examples of informal schemes are family support, community support groups, self-help groups, and micro insurance schemes. [17]

In the case of youngsters with disabilities, protection schemes would be relevant to provide them with grants and support to access education, meet their basic health and nutrition needs, and help them access the required rehabilitation services and assistive devices. Such schemes could also facilitate youngsters in their livelihood through cash assistance covering training costs, grants towards workplace adjustment costs, targeted wage subsidies to employers to encourage their recruitment, and the provision of subsidized loans or assets required to start a business. [18]

People with disabilities should have a legal right to access social protection measures. Although the informal schemes are valuable and remain a reality for youngsters with disabilities, the Liliane Foundation underlines the importance of making information on the official schemes accessible to people with disabilities and their caregivers, and to support them in making maximum use of available benefits.

The Liliane Foundation works in partnership with DPOs to increase the access of people with disabilities to social protection schemes. The Liliane Foundation promotes building alliances to advocate and lobby for the implementation of existing laws and for new laws where these are still lacking.

Since its inception, the Liliane Foundation has contributed towards sustainable livelihoods of children and youngsters with disabilities. There are already many activities that the organization undertakes in its work, as follows:

1. Multi-stakeholder collaboration - The Liliane Foundation uses this strategy with the aim of generating impact at the grass-roots level. The Liliane Foundation collaborates with diverse actors in the countries where it funds programmes. Those actors are: youngsters with disabilities, their caregivers, governments at different levels, civil society organizations, TVET institutions, the private sector, DPOs, research institutes, etc. The organizations do not need to become experts on wide range of identities, they can strengthen their existing disability work by further deepening their understanding about the intersecting forms of discrimination that children and youngsters with disabilities face on the grounds of gender, impairment type, age, race, ethnicity, religion or belief which all contribute to disability-related exclusion. The intersectional approach enables the Liliane Foundation and its partners to seek and engage in multi-stakeholder partnership with other relevant stakeholders and collaborate to tackle diverse intersecting inequalities more effectively.

2. Capacity development on the topic of sustainable livelihoods - The Liliane Foundation supports its strategic partners in developing the required expertise and experience that are needed to facilitate economic empowerment for youngsters with disabilities. Depending on the organizational needs, capacity building focuses on different areas such as: development of business plans, market assessments, disability inclusive workplaces, coaching of youngsters, training centres and employers, advising and providing technical support towards mainstream services, and lobbying for social protection. The Liliane Foundation provides this support through monitoring visits, technical assistance, training, facilitating exchanges, performing evaluations and sharing best practices.

3. Knowledge Partnerships - The Liliane Foundation builds partnerships with like-minded organizations, knowledge institutes and livelihood related institutions with the aim of learning from each other, and together tackling common challenges in creating sustainable livelihoods for youngsters with disabilities.
The Liliane Foundation considers knowledge management as a key strategy to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its own strategies and programmes. The Liliane Foundation profiles itself on inclusive livelihood through publishing and sharing its relevant knowledge with third parties. The Liliane Foundation and its strategic partners actively contribute to relevant platforms, symposia and debates at international, national and regional level, and seek cooperation with specialized organizations, governments, relevant networks and colleague organizations (disability and mainstream).

4. Effective networking - The Liliane Foundation is an active member of LINC, which is a global network of its strategic partners that are striving for the inclusion of children and youngsters with disabilities in society at large. Within LINC, the Liliane Foundation takes an important role as knowledge broker by sharing best practices, evaluating projects, and disseminating lessons learned. In addition, LINC offers a strong platform for the Liliane Foundation to build partnerships, link relevant stakeholders and contribute to more sustainable livelihoods for youngsters with disabilities in low-income countries.

The Liliane Foundation aims to further reflect on its quality of work, effectiveness and the added value it provides in the area of sustainable livelihoods. Based on some lessons learned from recent programme evaluations such as Employable, the Liliane Foundation will take future steps in enriching its impact at the grass-roots level. The future steps that will be considered are as follows:

1. Central role to the DPOs - The Liliane Foundation will give DPOs a more central role in the programmes on disability inclusive livelihoods. DPO members sometimes have access to governmental bodies and can influence their agendas for changes in policies and legislation, and better implementation of already existing policies.

2. Active participation of the youngsters in programming - Active involvement of youngsters with disabilities and their caregivers in the design of livelihoods programmes and activities is something that the Liliane Foundation and its partners needs to constantly be aware of. It requires changes in attitudes, moving from working for to working with youngsters with disabilities. Active participation of the youngsters will increase their opportunities to express their real desires and needs, and in turn allow development of more suitable individual interventions and livelihood trajectories. Further, their active involvement in the design of the interventions can also increase their self-esteem and self-confidence which are necessary ingredients for successful self-employment or employment. Stimulating youngsters to participate in sectors that are attractive and creative such as ICT can also increase their chances to get better prospects at the labour market and gain more professional experience.

3. Governments on board - More structural collaboration with governments can boost programmes and create more effective and sustainable results. In the Employable programme it was shown that the implementing partners successfully convinced government officials that some of the results of the programme were aligned with government targets. The implementing partners of the Employable programme managed to show government officials that disability inclusion is part of their own performance indicators, and this intervention has assisted in promoting sustainable change.

4. Investing in lobbying and advocacy - To determine the lobbying and advocacy agenda, the Liliane Foundation will keep track of relevant developments in international fora that are committed to economic inclusion of people with disabilities, such as the ILO, World Bank, etc. With the updated information, the Liliane Foundation, together with its strategic partners, DPOs and other relevant institutions and organizations, will pro-actively contribute to national and international policy influencing. It does this by influencing the agenda of the decision-makers and sharing practical experiences related to inclusive livelihood.
Bibliography


Notes


Abbreviations

CBR  Community Based Rehabilitation
DCDD  Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development
DPO  Disabled People’s Organization
IDDC  International Disability and Development Consortium
ILO  International Labour Organization
LINC  Liliane Foundation Inclusion Network
LMIC  Low to Middle Income Country
MFI  Micro-finance Institute
PWD  Person with Disabilities
SDG  Sustainable Development Goal
SPO  Strategic Partner Organization
TVET  Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institute
UNCRPD  United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Author  Liliane Foundation
Concept and design  Oranje boven, ’s-Hertogenbosch
Photo cover  Liliane Foundation

Liliane Foundation
Havensingel 26
5211 TX ’s-Hertogenbosch
The Netherlands

Phone number  +31 (0)73 518 94 20
E-mail  livelihood@lilianefonds.org

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Making children with disabilities stronger

At least 40 million children with a disability live in the poorest areas of Africa, Asia and Latin-America. They are often left behind and frequently victims of neglect, abuse and violence. This is contrary to their rights: they should be able to participate equally and fully, at home and in their communities - and to live a life to the highest possible standard.

Our dream for the future is that children with disabilities are equal and participate as fully as possible in their homes and their communities. Their lives have the highest possible quality.

To make that dream come true the Liliane Foundation contributes to a world that is open to everyone and in which children with disabilities in poor resource areas can develop and use all their talents. Together with local organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, we make children stronger and their environment more accessible.