

Joint End of Term Evaluation Report: The Economic Empowerment of Youth with Disabilities in Uganda and Improving Livelihoods for Youth with Disabilities in Uganda

Executive Summary

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Background Information

Sightsavers in partnership with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), Uganda National Union of the Blind (UNAB) and National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU) and 5 district local governments implemented two projects in Uganda on improving livelihoods and economic empowerment of youth with disabilities in Uganda.

The economic empowerment of youth with disabilities in Uganda project started in August 2016 and was funded to the sum of €909,730 by the European Union and the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) for four years. The project's goal was to support youth with disabilities to gain employable skills; increase their opportunities for employment and access to financial services. The project was implemented to build the capacity of (OPDs) and their youth committees, to advocate for the needs and rights of youth with disabilities. The second project improving livelihoods for young people with disabilities started in August 2017 for a three-year period and was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund to the sum of £399,971. The two projects aimed at providing 500 (450 Economic empowerment and 50 Improving livelihoods) youth with disabilities with vocational and/or business and soft skills training and 790 youth with financial literacy skills. These include 700 youth with disabilities under the Economic Empowerment project and 90 youth with disabilities under the Improving livelihoods for youth with disabilities in Uganda project. As the projects came to an end, Sightsavers commissioned an end term evaluation to establish achievements of the projects against objectives and outputs as detailed in the project documents.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation was guided by the specific evaluation questions jointly developed and drawn along the six OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. A result-oriented

evaluation approach was used to measure the extent to which the project objectives and interventions were achieved.

The process was highly participatory involving key project stakeholders —Sightsavers, OPDs, District Local Governments, Employers, Vocational Training Institutions (VTIs)— at each stage of the evaluation process including the evaluation design, identification of evaluation questions, deciding the scope and targeted audience for the evaluation; data collection and validation of the evaluation findings. The evaluation used a range of evaluation methods and tools, namely: focus group discussions with project participants, family/community members and OPDs; key informant interviews with Vocational training institutes, employers, financial institutions and project leaders. The evaluation used the most significant change technique to document change stories and conducted direct observations in vocational training institutes to assess adaptations and improvement in accessibility. In addition, the evaluation secured, and analysed secondary data provided by the project.

Main findings

The analysis of both primary and secondary data clearly indicates that the two projects largely met the intended objectives and impacted positively on the lives of the youth with disabilities, their families and community. Overall, the evaluation rates the performance of the projects as ‘satisfactory’ because there was strong evidence that the projects met most of the project objectives and indicators. However, there were areas for improvement especially in access to formal financial services, policy influence in favour of youth with disabilities and the sustainability of the business enterprises.

Project performance rating against the six evaluation criteria

Relevance

Excellent 

The overall rating on the relevance criteria is based on the following:

- The objectives of the projects were in line with the National Development Plan (NDP) 2015/2016-2019/2020 focus of enhancing human capital development and increase employment creation through fast tracking skills development and harnessing the demographic dividend.
- The projects were in line with government economic and skills development programs, notably the Youth Livelihoods Program (YLP), Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP), the Emyoga¹ program and Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) among others.
- Access to vocational skills training and employment opportunities for the youths with disabilities were among the strategic priorities for the National OPDs.

¹ “Emyoga” is a government program for skilling Ugandan youths who have no skills.

Effectiveness

Satisfactory



The evaluation rated the extent to which the project objectives and indicators have been achieved and found these to be satisfactory given that:

- 30.4% and 37% respectively had accessed waged employment or were in self-employment. Most of the youth with disabilities were in self-employment. 38% and 37% respectively reported having marketable skills achieved through vocational training. 58% and 61% of the participants monitored under the Economic Empowerment and Improving livelihoods projects respectively who sought for a financial service received the service. Half of those who received the financial services were satisfied with the service.
- 77% and 74% of the targeted participants for the Economic Empowerment project and Improving livelihoods project were supported (financially or otherwise) by their families to undertake training.
- 95% of the Economic Empowerment project participants and 73% of the Improving livelihoods project participants were participating in saving groups.
- Strengthened the OPDs capacity to enable the economic empowerment of youth with disabilities.
- 74% (76 of 103) of the participants under the economic empowerment project and 71% (5/7) of the participants under the Improving livelihoods project who tried to access government livelihoods programs succeeded.
- However, the outbreak of COVID-19 and other bottlenecks affected some youths from starting their own business enterprises and some closed their businesses.

Efficiency

Excellent



The evaluation concluded that the projects were implemented with minimal costs and that resources (both financial and human resources) were effectively managed to achieve the projects' targets, and therefore gets an excellent rating. This rating was attributed to the following factors:

- The projects were implemented with minimal costs and resources (both human and financial) were effectively managed to produce the desired results.
- Recruitment and stationing of staff in the region to implement the project ensuring availability of the staff to effectively implement and monitor the project with minimal costs.
- 452 out of the targeted 450 youth with disabilities under the economic empowerment project and 50 out of the targeted 50 youth with disabilities under the Improving livelihoods project were provided with vocational skills.
- 452 (100%) and 90 (100%) of youth with disabilities targeted under the Economic Empowerment and Improving livelihoods projects respectively were provided with start-up kits and or Income Generating projects.

- 755 youth with disabilities were provided with business skills and financial literacy. These include 684 under Economic Empowerment project and 71 under the Improving livelihoods project.
- 666 (95%) of the targeted 700 youth with disabilities under Economic Empowerment project and 66 (73%) of the targeted 90 youth with disabilities under the Improving livelihoods project joined savings groups.

Impact

Satisfactory 

The evaluation established that the projects contributed significantly to the impact on youth employability and access to employment, and therefore gives a rating of satisfactory. The projects:

- Equipped youth with disabilities in the five districts with employable skills through vocational training enabling them to access waged employment or start their own enterprises. Of the participants monitored under the Economic Empowerment and Improving livelihoods projects, 38% and 37% respectively reported having marketable skills achieved through vocational training.
- Increased access to incomes for 30.4% and 37% of the youth with disabilities under the Economic Empowerment and Improving livelihoods projects who accessed waged employment or were in self-employment as a result of skills acquired. This has enabled them to meet their basic needs without external support and to be independent.
- Recognition, respect and inclusion of youth with disabilities in development programs, family and community functions. Over 74% (76/103) of the participants under the economic empowerment project and 71% (5/7) of the participants under the Improving livelihoods project who tried to access government livelihoods programs succeeded.
- Increased access to financial services (savings and loans) by youth with disabilities. 58% and 61% of the participants monitored under the Economic Empowerment and Improving livelihoods projects respectively, had obtained at least one financial product from a formal or non-formal financial institution by the end of the project. 77% and 74% of the targeted participants for the Economic Empowerment project and Improving livelihoods project were supported (financially or otherwise) by their families to undertake training.
- Strengthened the OPDs capacity to enable the economic empowerment of youth with disabilities.

Sustainability

Satisfactory 

The evaluation gives a satisfactory rating for this evaluation criterion. The decision is based on the potential for sustainability and threats to sustainability observed during the evaluation.

- Skills training and provision of start-up kits enabling youths to start their business enterprises

- Strong partnerships with OPDs, government and Vocational Training Institutions (VTIs) fostered by the project
- The positive change in attitudes and practices of key stakeholders has potential for sustainability.
- Availability and accessibility of mainstream government livelihood and economic empowerment programs

Coherence/coordination

Excellent 

The extent to which the project has coordinated with other similar initiatives, and the degree to which the project design and implementation is internally coherent was rated as excellent. The basis for this rating includes:

- The projects were in line with European Development Fund (EDF) program 2014-2020, sustainable development goals especially goal 1,5,8, 10 and 11, Uganda's National Development Plan 2015/16-2019/20 objectives of enhancing human capital development and increasing employment creation through fast tracking skills development and harnessing the demographic dividend.
- The National Lottery Community Fund $\frac{3}{4}$ NLCF project worked collaboratively with people with disabilities and other East Africa Development Fund (EADF $\frac{3}{4}$ grant holders through biannual partner learning meetings
- In the region, the EC project also worked with VSO and Total to support vocational training of Youths with disabilities who missed enrolment and also enabled some youth who trained in welding to access international certification.

Conclusions

The projects were largely successful and met most (10/12) output indicator targets. The projects enabled youth with disabilities to acquire vocational skills and start-up kits to start their business enterprises which increased incomes of the youths, enabled them to meet their basic needs and to improve their livelihoods and those of their family and community members. The youth joined informal/village savings and loans associations (VSLA) where they save money and have access to loans.

The two projects contributed to the change in family and community negative attitude and practices towards youth with disabilities and fostered social change and acceptance of youths in the community and general development programs. Lastly, the projects were successful in strengthening the capacity of local ODPs to continue advocating for the rights of youth with disabilities, access to government mainstream programs and to manage similar projects in future. The adaptations made by the VTIs (and to some extent local government) have benefited and will continue to benefit youth with disabilities.

Lessons Learnt

- A strong and formal partnership with local government and key institutions is important for building synergies and sustainability of the programs targeting people with disabilities: The project identified, engaged and interested key stakeholders into project activities to promote ownership and leverage on different opportunities offered by the partners for building synergies and sustainability.
- The approach of strengthening family support systems for youth with multiple sensory impairment or severe disability ensured ownership and proper management of the projects given to youth with disabilities by family members which is a strong pillar for the sustainability of the projects.
- The focus on individual needs of youth with disabilities was a very good approach. Through this approach, the youths were placed in appropriate training programs such as VTIs, Home based training or apprenticeship. This ensured that all youths especially the most vulnerable (youth with multiple sensory impairments) were enrolled and supported.
- The Inclusion of youth with disabilities into mainstream savings groups makes the groups more sustainable and cost effective. Due to fewer numbers of youth with disabilities in the parish or subcounty, forming exclusive savings groups for youths with disabilities makes it expensive for them because of the need to travel long distances to save or attend meetings. Mainstream savings groups cover a smaller area hence making it easy for the youth with disabilities to participate effectively. The mainstream groups also foster social inclusion and acceptance of the youth by other group members and communities.

Recommendations

1. Future projects should ensure that other categories of youth with disabilities benefit from the projects. The two projects largely benefitted youth with physical disabilities with 47% of all project participants. This can be done using a quota system or engaging all other OPDs.
2. Involve the vocational training institutions in the Industrial/internship placement of the trainees to enable them to monitor the trainees and support them to learn. The VTIs can also follow up youth with disabilities to continuously assess their performance.
3. Periodic review of the performance of the vocational training institutions involved in the project on their capacity to equip youth with disabilities with the needed skills.
4. Extend the vocational skills training duration for some courses like carpentry and plumbing which require more time as provided for in the Directorate of Industrial Training guidelines. The duration for some courses should be flexible depending on the course and the disability related learning needs of the trainees.
5. Build strong and formal Partnership with formal financial institutions to develop financial packages for the youth with disabilities.

6. Provide career guidance and encourage female youth with disabilities to enrol to male dominated courses such as mechanics, welding, carpentry among others to widen their employment opportunities.
7. Engage and sign memorandum of understanding or any formal agreement with parents/caregivers and youth with disabilities on their role in supporting youth with disabilities to complete the training and start their own business enterprises. It's against these commitments that it becomes easy to hold the parents accountable if they ever became non supportive. The projects should also increase monitoring and support visit to families to ensure that their commitments are met.