

What recent evaluations are telling us about our work in livelihoods

FINDINGS FROM THE 2018-2022 META-EVALUATION

CBM Australia recently looked at evaluations of our CBID work over the last five years. While many evaluations highlighted big transformations in people's lives because of livelihoods support, overall, the outcomes were mixed.

This was particularly the case for our Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) work where livelihoods work emerged as a common area of weakness.

This is what we learnt about livelihood support from the evaluations:

One size does not fit all

Livelihood activities need to be tailored to individuals, including their disability type, gender, location, level of family support, and the economic market. However, many of our livelihoods works was assessed as taking a "one size fits all" approach. To achieve high beneficiary targets (part of the project plan), evaluations highlighted that there was not enough attention to understanding and supporting individual needs.

A tendency to work with people with less challenging impairments

In a number of economic development projects and projects that supported Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs), people with more severe impairments were not being included.

Some CBID evaluations noted the need to have better strategies for including people with intellectual impairments.

People with disabilities still on the sidelines

In some projects, family members were trained in new livelihood activities, and the family's income improved. However, in many instances, the family member living with a disability was not involved, often because their impairment was severe. Our partners did not necessarily have the knowledge about how to overcome the barriers that stopped people with disabilities from getting directly involved.

Missed opportunity to show change

Too often quality baseline data was not collected and recorded at the start of a project, and project teams were not up to the challenge of drawing out this before and after data to analyse and compare. As a result, we have missed opportunities to track how people's income levels have changed, and hopefully improved. Doing this



Through our CBID project, women like Khaleda are provided livelihood training and resources, increasing their confidence and independence. This should be imperative in all economic

development projects. We need to understand what is stopping project teams from doing this, and how can we further support this?

Other weaknesses noted in evaluations

- Livelihood approaches that lacked risk analysis or mitigation measures for when planned approaches did not eventuate.
- Scoping assessment tools that focused too much on people's interests and experience, with not enough attention to market demand. This meant people were trained in skills, but still could not earn income.
- A lack of follow-up to ensure people were benefiting from the vocational skills they were trained in.
- Poor quality training in financial management or business planning, delivered by a sub-partner, with the implementing partner unaware of these shortcomings.
- Provision of "livelihood kits", which were in some cases not used (or sold).

Good practice: linking with employers to learn on the job

A good approach was in a CBID project in Aceh, Indonesia, which linked people with employers to learn on the job for a short period of time (this often then led to job offers). This brought about huge life changes for the individuals involved. 270 people benefitted. This work took time to organise matches between employers and people with disabilities, and numbers of beneficiaries were small. As a result, the team over-estimated the number of people they could support and did not achieve this target. Nonetheless, their approach was commendable. They did not compromise on the quality of support in order to reach the target.

Assistive devices and livelihoods: something to track

In our CBID work, we emphasise the need to ensure access to assistive devices, as a precondition for improving livelihoods. Interestingly, none of the evaluations of CBID projects looked at this. Upcoming evaluations should gather evidence about the value of accessing assistive devices, as part of the pathway for people with disability to improve their livelihoods and social networks.

Going forward

As our CBID program continues to support people with disability to improve their livelihoods, it is important that we begin to address some of these common weaknesses identified here. This needs to happen during project planning. We also need to ensure our monitoring visits and evaluation teams assess how the project is tracking, and that action is taken to ensure the best results.