



# Disability Inclusion Facilitators

Young persons with disabilities as changemakers



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**Cover Photo:** Disability Inclusion Facilitators (L-R): Musa Mwambu, Robert Ssewagudde, Jada Khamis Murshal, Naomi Akwee, Eric Wakoko and Dorcus Kabahenda

**Cover Photo By:** Erika Bojarczuk



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# Executive Summary

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The Disability Inclusion Facilitator (DIF) Approach seeks to position young persons with disabilities as agents of change -- building awareness, and supporting the implementation of disability inclusion in mainstream programmes, services and workplaces. Through their work, commitment to disability inclusion by a range of mainstream actors across government, civil society and the private sector is steered into action. Persons with disabilities in turn are connected to the skills development, livelihood and employment opportunities created through these partnerships and given the necessary support to increase their chances of success.

DIFs are envisioned as key assets to Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in line with the motto of the disability rights movement 'Nothing about us without us', and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Article 4.3 that calls for the active involvement of persons with disabilities through their representative organisations in issues relating to them.

Working with Disability Inclusion Facilitators has proven to be effective: in four years of the Make 12.4% Work Initiative, 151 mainstream actors including 73 development organisations, 63 companies, 10 educational institutions and 1 ministry committed to disability inclusion through signing up as members. 3,231 people were trained, including staff and higher management of companies and development organisations, through sessions on disability awareness and Disability Inclusive Programming. 468 persons with disabilities were supported directly by Make 12.4% Work through soft skills training, 'incubator projects', work placements and COVID-19 skills development activities. 7,087 persons with disabilities were included by member organisations and companies in livelihood projects and skills development programmes. These achievements were made possible through the work of Disability Inclusion Facilitators who were core to each element of the Initiative and spearheaded most of the activities done.

Interest in Disability Inclusion Facilitators has risen over the years and the approach has been scaled up in other programmes beyond inclusive employment. Currently over 100 DIFs are active in 11 countries, trained to support disability inclusion in humanitarian action, Business Development Support, access to sexual reproductive health and rights, land rights and governance, and rural economic transformation. DIFs have reported impact at individual level as a result of their work including gaining a rewarding career, increased confidence and self esteem, growth of social and professional networks, and financial independence.

A number of lessons have also been learned along the way, supporting the refinement of the DIF model in subsequent programmes. The length of training for DIFs has been extended and a systematic training and certification process developed. Rolling out of the DIF approach has become a collaborative effort between Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), Light for the World and other partners, with OPDs taking a more active lead in the selection, mentorship and certification of DIFs. More emphasis has also been placed on the career development of DIFs as well as professionalisation of the advisory services they offer, and different strategies have been tested to support the sustainability of the approach.





Allan Nume, a DIF based in Gulu, northern Uganda takes a session on basic sign language.

# Introduction

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) ratified in 2008, broadened perspectives on disability from the narrower focus on the functional limitations experienced by persons with disabilities to the physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers created by society that result in inequalities. The UNCRPD (Article 32) emphasises that all development should be inclusive of, and benefit persons with disabilities and calls upon its over 180 State Parties to make necessary changes and adopt new strategies to ensure the full and active participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of community life.

Despite this, little progress has been made to move policy to action. Millions of persons with disabilities around the world continue to be left behind in employment and livelihood activities. This is not only a violation of their right to decent work (Article 27, UNCRPD) and economic growth (SDG 8), but also affects their dignity in the communities where they live.

Young persons with disabilities are one of the poorest and most marginalised of the world's youth. Estimates indicate that there are between 180 and 220 million youth with disabilities globally, with nearly 80 percent of them in developing countries -- yet the majority struggle to be heard<sup>1</sup>. Their needs, aspirations and contributions are often overlooked and, as a group, they remain nearly invisible. Unemployment rates for youth with disabilities are often higher than for the rest of the youth population<sup>2</sup>. Inequities in accessing education and vocational training impact the employment options available to them, while negative attitudes about disability and discrimination based on disability status create significant barriers to long term, appropriately compensated employment. The lack of access to education and vocational training also perpetuates the cycle of negative attitudes and stigma towards disability. For young women with disabilities, the situation is even worse as they are forced to work against disability and gender-based societal prejudice.

*I have faced a challenge in finding a job. Employers see me as a vulnerable person who cannot do anything, they think I won't deliver, or I will fail their organisation. My major [impairment] is my eyesight, but my brain is okay. I dream of having a job one day.*

**Norah (2021)**

The Disability Inclusion Facilitator (DIF) Approach as developed and tested under the Make 12.4% Work Initiative in Uganda sought to tackle this challenge by positioning young persons with disabilities as agents of change - building awareness, and supporting the implementation of disability inclusion in mainstream programmes, services and workplaces. Through their work, commitment to disability inclusion by a range of mainstream actors across government, civil society and the private sector was steered into action. Youth with disabilities in turn were connected to the opportunities created through these partnerships and given the necessary support to increase their chances of success. The DIF approach has proven to be effective: in four years, over 150 mainstream actors committed to disability inclusion through signing up as members of the Make 12.4% Work Initiative and over 7000 persons with disabilities have been included in employment and livelihood opportunities. This learning brief zooms in on the development of the approach, its key elements, impact and lessons learned, for the benefit of the programme team, implementing partners and external parties.

1 United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs -Youth. [Youth With Disabilities](#) [Online Article]

2 Mitra, S., Posarac, A., & Vick, B. (2013). [Disability and poverty in developing countries: a multidimensional study](#). World Development, 41, 1-18.

# Development of the DIF Approach

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In 2017, Light for the World conducted a scoping study as part of the Livelihood Improvement Challenge - an action learning project that aimed at developing scalable practices for inclusive livelihood development for persons with disabilities. The Challenge aimed to better understand the barriers that limit the participation of youth with disabilities in waged employment and livelihood programmes, as well as discover, test and share good practices on the same among a range of stakeholders.

The scoping study kicked off with a 5-day Learning Expedition led by a group of youth with disabilities and practitioners. Through a series of focus group discussions, interviews and a desk study, the study team visited and documented five good practices around economic empowerment of youth implemented by disability-specific as well as mainstream livelihood programmes. The learning expedition was also supplemented by radio polls, talk shows and a call center survey in collaboration with a technical partner and local radio stations in Northern Uganda, reaching a wider audience in both urban and rural communities. The radio polls and talk shows explored barriers faced by youth with disabilities in accessing vocational training programmes and ensuing employment.



Eric Wakoko, a Disability Inclusion Advisor (formerly a DIF based in Kampala, central Uganda) during a learning and experience sharing session.



### Three key insights arose from the scoping study:

**Unintentional Exclusion:** While there were a number of highly innovative and adaptive youth-focussed livelihood programmes run by various development organisations in Uganda, young women and men with disabilities were often left out. This exclusion was not deliberate, but mostly out of the assumption that this group of vulnerable youth would or should be covered by disability-specific organisations and government. These organisations also often lacked awareness on disability and knowledge on how to put disability inclusion into practice.

**Access to Information:** Persons with disabilities and their families, especially in rural areas, lack access to information about opportunities and

support structures available to them, as well as access to information that would help them to plan and actively make decisions about their lives and livelihoods.

**Self-exclusion:** Even when persons with disabilities are aware of opportunities, they are often less likely to proactively reach out to, and participate - either due to negative experiences in the past, or an assumption that those opportunities were not meant for them. Growing up in an environment of low expectations with more emphasis laid on their disabilities than abilities also greatly affected the self-esteem of many youth with disabilities.

## Creating the DIF Approach

Lessons learned from the scoping study were the starting point of a weeklong co-creation process applying principles of **Human Centered Design** - with the ultimate goal of coming up with a “sustainable, inclusive, youth-led, and context-specific solution that addresses livelihood challenges that youth with disabilities in Uganda face”.

‘Make 12.4% Work’ was born; seeking to build a cross-sectoral momentum for disability inclusion at work. 12.4% stands for the population of Ugandans with a disability<sup>1</sup>. The Make 12.4% Work approach involves both creating more ‘**supply**’ of youth with disabilities who are ready to work or start their own businesses and stimulating ‘**demand**’ from employers and development organisations by building their capacity to support persons with disabilities adequately in their systems.

The initiative was designed to be led by a select group of youth with disabilities commonly referred to as **Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs)**, trained through a competency-based fellowship called the **Disability Inclusion Academy**.



A co-creation session held during an activity under the Make 12.4% Work Initiative.

<sup>1</sup> UBOS (2019). [The National Population and Housing Census 2014 – National Analytical Report on persons with disabilities](#).

# Why have young persons with disabilities as DIFs

The DIF model differs from other similar community facilitator models that have been developed and implemented in a number of development programmes. In addition to the model being rooted in structures of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, it places young persons with disabilities in the lead of programme implementation, works to develop a supply to meet the growing global demand for disability inclusion advisory services, and focuses on system change by placing youth as catalysts of change. Below is the trifactor that makes the DIF model unique and pioneer in its own right:

## Self-advocacy

“Nothing about us without us”: actively involving persons with disabilities in decisions and programmes that affect their lives



## Value of Lived Experiences

The combination of lived experience of disability and technical expertise on disability inclusion (gained through their training) brings forth creative and practical advice.

## Ability in Action

Having trainers with disabilities delivering disability awareness sessions shifts the focus from their impairments to their abilities and has a lasting impact on their audience.



Esther Kyoziira (2nd L), Chief Executive Officer of the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) hands over an award to Robert Ssewagudde (R), a DIF during the endline event of Make 12.4% Work

# DIFs as an Asset for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

## Legal Framework

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) was influenced by the active participation of persons with disabilities in the drafting of the text. The key principle of the Convention on the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities under the motto "nothing about us without us" is captured in Article 4.3 which states:

*In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organisations.*

The CRPD sets a unique role for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as key intermediaries to represent and channel the views and perspectives of persons with disabilities. Distinct from Organisations *for* Persons with Disabilities, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities are a specific type of civil society organisation that are led, directed and governed by persons with disabilities, and have a mandate to speak on their behalf.



The principles of the CRPD of participation of OPDs have been core in the design and development of the Make 12.4% Work Initiative as have Article 27 on the right of persons with disabilities to work and Article 32 which states that all international development programmes should be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.

The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), the national umbrella body for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda is a key implementing partner of Make 12.4% Work. In addition, six of NUDIPU's members; Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD), Uganda Albinism Association (UAA), Uganda National Association of the Blind (UNAB), Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD), Mental Health Uganda and Foundation of Persons affected by Dwarfism-Uganda (FPAD-U) were instrumental in the setting up of the pilot Disability Inclusion Academy which trained the first cohort of DIFs to support Make 12.4% Work. Representatives from these organisations participated in the development of the curriculum and facilitated sessions during the Training of Trainers programme. Since then, a symbiotic relationship between DIFs and OPDs has been carved; from the selection and training of DIFs, to their mentorship and use of their services in supporting disability inclusive development under Make 12.4% Work and beyond.



*DIFs are persons with disabilities who are identified from OPDs and some of them are from the District Unions of Persons with Disabilities. They have done the wonderful work of creating awareness about the programme and disability. I believe the lessons we have learned are going to enable us to grow and do more.*

***Excerpt from the speech of Esther Kyoziira, Chief Executive Officer of NUDIPU, during the endline event of Make 12.4% Work (2022)***

## Symbiotic roles between OPDs and DIFs

OPDs recommend members of their organisations to participate in the Disability Inclusion Academy, support mobilisation of young persons with disabilities from their constituencies and spread general information about the DIF model. During the fellowship period, OPD representatives actively support mentorship of DIFs as well as the assessment and certification process. Being recognised disability structures, OPDs are able to facilitate DIF work by connecting them to different key stakeholders at district level. Persons with disabilities known to and supported by OPDs in their respective areas of operation are linked to DIFs who in turn match them to the various skills development, livelihood or employment opportunities they create with companies and organisations. OPDs also utilise DIF skills and knowledge on disability inclusive development in other activities and programmes.



Deborah Lyute, during the launch of the Make 12.4% Work Initiative

*In the previous engagement programmes on Make 12.4% Work, NUDIPU organizes sensitization and awareness sessions with employers and employer agencies like the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE), Human Resource Managers Association of Uganda, District Service Commissions, etc. on disability inclusion.*

*With the huge number of employers and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) interested in making their workplaces and programmes disability inclusive, the DIF services come in handy to address the demand for disability inclusion through coaching and follow up.*

*Therefore, DIFs play a link between persons with disabilities on one hand and CSOs, government and service providers on the other hand.*

***Deborah Lyute, Programme Officer - NUDIPU (2023)***

DIFs support the mandates and efforts of their respective OPDs and add value using their skills and knowledge on disability inclusion. Some DIFs have taken up leadership and staff positions in OPDs. DIFs are also instrumental in strengthening OPD structures through availability and provision of technical disability inclusion advisory services as well as resource mobilisation through affiliate programmes utilising the DIF approach.

# Roles of DIFs

Disability Inclusion Facilitators serve three main roles;



## **Relationship Builder:**

DIFs actively seek new partnerships with mainstream actors, develop professional relationships with the appropriate stakeholders, and are able to explain the importance of disability inclusion in a way that generates a high level of willingness and commitment.



## **Trainer, Role Model, and Advisor:**

DIFs model ability in action in all of their professional engagements. They organize and deliver bespoke awareness trainings, and perform disability inclusion assessments for member organisations and companies. They support action planning for inclusion, and provide technical advice on how to achieve these goals.



## **Broker and Monitor:**

DIFs facilitate open conversations with partners about the disability inclusion progress made, discussing challenges, suggesting solutions and documenting stories. DIFs also match persons with disabilities with existing opportunities including job opportunities, trainings, and livelihoods programmes. DIFs actively follow up on individuals with disabilities matched, and provide support to them and the employer as needed.





Ayima Akibar, a DIF based in Yumbe district, northern Uganda

*I wanted to advocate for persons with disabilities but I did not know yet what to say and how to say it. Through the training, I gained the facilitation skills to use. I look forward to influencing some of the change in organisations and communities in Yumbe district.*

**Akibar (2021)**

## Selection and Training

### Educational Background and Experience

To be eligible, DIFs are required to have a minimum of high school (Grade 10/ O'level) education. The education qualification is kept low accounting for the fact that many persons with disabilities tend to drop out of school earlier or face significant barriers in accessing education. However, literacy and proficiency in the official language(s) of the respective country is required due to the expectation placed on DIFs regarding adequate reporting and communication in a corporate and professional environment. No experience in disability inclusion is required though affiliation, membership or leadership in a disability support structure including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities is an added bonus. A lot of attention is paid towards their individual qualities, such as proactiveness, problem-solving skills, confidence and leadership skills, as well as their passion and ambition for the role. Additional emphasis is laid on representation of women, and different types of impairments.

To successfully fulfil the roles expected of them, DIFs undergo a systematic selection and training process commonly referred to as the 'Disability Inclusion Academy'. A series of steps are taken before, during and after an Academy to ensure consistent results.

# Disability Inclusion Academy

## Development of Curriculum & Competency

### Framework

In consultation with OPDs and implementing partners, a curriculum is developed covering core aspects of disability inclusion as well as skills and competencies required for a particular programme or needs of a particular region/country.

### Shortlist

A shortlist of 30-50 applicants is made with consideration for gender, youth and representation of different types of impairments. Shortlisted applicants are then invited to attend the two-day selection training or a 1-day interview, conducted with representation from all implementing partners and existing regional disability structures.

### Training of Trainers

Covers roles of a DIF (relationship builder, trainer and advisor, monitor and coach) with specific attention to areas in a programme that the DIFs will be expected to contribute to. Sessions are covered by a range of experts sourced from OPDs, experienced DIFs and implementing partners.

### 6-9 months fellowship

The DIF trainees receive on-the-job training and mentorship from more experienced DIFs, Disability Inclusion Advisors, mentors from OPDs and implementing partners.

## Assessment and Certification

During the fellowship, Trainee DIFs are assessed on their performance on a defined set of competencies and scores are awarded by the assigned mentors. Those that score above the stipulated cut-off point (usually 75%) are then certified as DIFs. DIFs are awarded a service provider contract and given a professional fee for activities they perform.

### Mobilisation

All implementing partners, national/ regional OPDs and other existing disability structures in a region of interest participate in informing youth with disabilities about the Academy and encouraging them to apply. The process of mobilisation also involves other communication channels such as social media platforms, radio and newspaper to attract candidates that may not be actively involved in any disability structures.

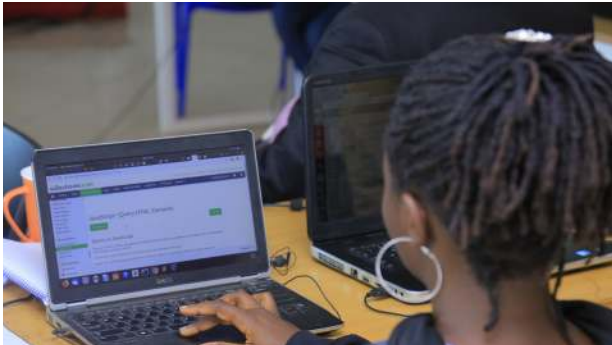
### Selection

In a 2-day selection process, the basics on understanding disability are covered as well as a breakdown of the roles of a DIF as a mobiliser/resource person. Based on overall performance, 10-20 participants are chosen to continue for the 5-day Training of Trainers (TOT). In a 1-day interview selection process, candidates are given a short activity/assignment accompanied by a one-on-one in-depth interview.

# Steps of Engagement

Adapted from [Kotter's 8-step Change Model](#), DIFs go through systematic steps of engagement to drive change on disability inclusion with each mainstream actor they engage with. Content covered in these steps may vary depending on the context, or actor.

## Understand the Organisation



An ICT Training session

DIFs learn as much as they can about the organisation before reaching out, including the values and mission of the organisation, organisational structure, programmes (or type of industry in the case of the private sector), and culture. DIFs do this through a combination of personal connections and online research. This enables them to reach out to the right people in the organisation, and to tailor their approach.

## Create Urgency



Dorcus, a DIF based in central Uganda, talking to a manager of an enterprise.

To create a sense of urgency to act, DIFs pitch the need and benefits of disability inclusion to the organisation. While companies may be drawn to the business case for inclusion, civil society actors may be more interested in aligning, and contributing to the achievement of internationally rectified conventions and policies such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UNCRPD, in addition to the national frameworks on disability, or their own mandates around empowerment of the most vulnerable in society. The pitches that DIFs make are tailored accordingly.

## Generate Management Commitment



Top management of an organisation signs a Proof of Commitment during an event.

Once an organisation is on board to making more deliberate actions towards disability inclusion, a Proof of Commitment is signed. This is the official start of their inclusion journey. A supportive and encouraging relationship begins between the DIF and two designated focal people chosen by the organisation to champion inclusion.



## Awareness Training and Sessions on Disability Inclusive Programming

DIFs deliver a series of Disability Awareness Trainings to staff and management of the organisation, covering topics such as respectful language, reasonable accommodations, and the basics of how to include people with different types of impairments. Other sessions on inclusive hiring practices and inclusive communications may also be arranged depending on context, interest or an identified need. For development organisations, DIFs provide specific training on including persons with disabilities in all aspects of the project cycle - covering deliberate mobilisation strategies, budgeting, monitoring inclusion and participation.



Fiona Akullu, a former DIF now employed by NUDIPU, during a disability awareness training.

*One time during a Disability Awareness Training, a participant confessed to denying an interviewee a job opportunity despite being the best performer because he didn't know how to handle her or deal with persons with disabilities generally. He said that if he had got such a training earlier, his reaction would have been different. This is what being a DIF means to me. It's exhilarating each time I realise that my message is taken home and is bringing about positive change.*

**Fiona**

## Benchmark Inclusion



Staff of an educational institution in Karamoja, north eastern Uganda doing a basic accessibility audit

DIFs guide an organisation's self assessment to determine where their existing policies, systems and process stand on disability inclusion using a range of tools including a specially designed Disability Inclusion Scorecard (DISC) or the Disability Readiness Checklist for members of the Uganda Business Disability Network - based off of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network Self Assessment Tool. Based on the assessment, the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities identified during the exercise, an action plan is developed with specific timelines and people responsible for each action.

## Specific actions taken on disability inclusion



Caleb, during his work experience placement at Share An Opportunity Uganda, a member of Make 12.4% Work.

Depending on the realities of the organisation; their interests, needs, capacities and resources available, a range of steps may be taken towards driving disability inclusion forward. These may include pilot programmes on inclusion, work experience placements, hiring persons with disabilities, including persons with disabilities in existing livelihood programmes and marketing, or procurement systems, policy adaptations, and/or addressing accessibility within the organisation. There are no one-size-fits-all actions; DIFs guide the organisation to recognise both quick wins; actions that can happen in the short term, as well as other actions that may take a longer time to achieve.

## Supportive Monitoring



Dorcus (R) a DIF, during a supportive monitoring visit to a trainee during their work experience placement.

Supportive Monitoring visits conducted by DIFs are twofold; checking on progress made on the organisation's disability inclusion action plan and support on other ongoing activities such as any work experience placements or inclusive employment/ workplace initiatives. These visits are organised monthly, bi monthly, quarterly or biannually depending on the actor.

## Documentation and Action Learning



Denish Oweka (R), during a documentation visit to a successful entrepreneur he supported with business development services.

DIFs regularly report on and document changes made at programme, organisational and individual level in support of disability inclusion, achievements made and lessons learned so that the affiliated programme and other interested parties have the opportunity to grow from the experience.

# The DIF End-to-End Journey

1

## Application

Potential DIF finds out about the programme, gets interested and applies. OPDs are actively involved in spreading information, recommending potential applicants and supporting the application process.

2

## Shortlist

Potential DIF gets shortlisted and invited to participate in the selection process. OPDs are represented and actively participate in the shortlisting process.

3

## Selection

Potential DIF goes through the selection process and is picked to continue for the Training of Trainers programme. OPDs actively participate in the selection process.



4

#### **Training of Trainers + Fellowship**

Potential DIF goes through the Training of Trainers programme and continues into the fellowship period. OPDs take sessions as planned in the training programme and take up mentorship roles for the trainee DIFs.

5

#### **Contracted as a Service Provider**

The now certified DIF is contracted as a service provider, offering technical support to a range of actors on disability inclusion. DIF continues to support their representative OPD with their skills and expertise.

6

#### **Variety of Pathways**

- Becoming mentors
- Consultancies
- Promotion to Disability Inclusion Officer/ Advisor
- Jobs with OPDs, as community leaders, with the public or private sector, or in NGOs.

A snapshot at the journey of a DIF

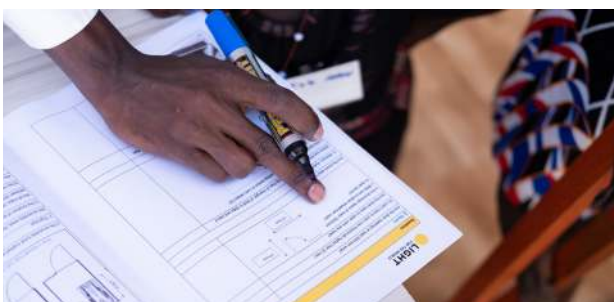


Ambrose Murangira, Thematic Director Disability Inclusion, takes a session during a Disability Inclusion Academy

# Scaling Up

At the start of Make 12.4% Work, six Disability Inclusion Facilitators went through a Training of Trainers programme which enabled them to gain the skills and knowledge to garner commitment on disability inclusion from a range of private sector actors and development organisations. As the membership of the initiative grew, so did the need to increase the number of Disability Inclusion Facilitators. Interest in the DIF model also rose from other Light for the World focus countries, presenting an opportunity to further develop, test and scale the approach in a range of contexts;

## Development of a Standard Curriculum and DIF Training Process



A DIF uses the Handbook during a Disability Inclusion Academy

Increasing the reach of Make 12.4% Work in northern Uganda birthed the first ever Disability Inclusion Academy in November 2018. A range of tools and resources to support the Academy were developed through a collaborative process with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), including a DIF Handbook and Competency Based Framework, as well as mentorship and assessment forms.

Subsequent Disability Inclusion Academies supported the refinement of these tools and the addition of extra resources to support practitioners to set up Disability Inclusion Academies and adequately train DIFs in other settings.

## DIFs in Humanitarian Action

Light for the World in South Sudan has trained and certified Disability Inclusion Facilitators to support humanitarian efforts run by the country office and its partners, as well as other programmes on inclusive education and sports. The DIF model in the country catalysed the further development and formal structuring of the umbrella Organisation of Persons with Disabilities. The humanitarian crisis following Cyclone Idai in Mozambique in 2019 also saw the scaling of the DIF model by Light for the World Mozambique. DIFs were trained to support awareness raising and advocacy on the need for disability inclusion in recovery programmes run by the government and a number of development organisations.



DIFs in Mozambique engaged in a co-creation session on disability inclusive humanitarian action with Butterfly Works.

## DIFs in Inclusive Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

The My Body My Future programme implemented by PLAN International aims at empowering adolescents, with the specific focus on girls, in understanding their sexual and reproductive needs and rights. The programme addresses the root causes of gender inequality in communities and societies fighting against child marriage, teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation. Light for the World Uganda provided technical support to the programme on the inclusion of adolescents with disabilities as well as the development of inclusive intervention strategies and partnerships within the programme. DIFs were trained to support the building and strengthening of existing partnerships with OPDs and the programme, networking to mobilise programme participants, and awareness raising with a range of stakeholders on disability inclusion in sexual reproductive health, rights and services.



Participants during the Disability Inclusion Academy held in partnership with PLAN International



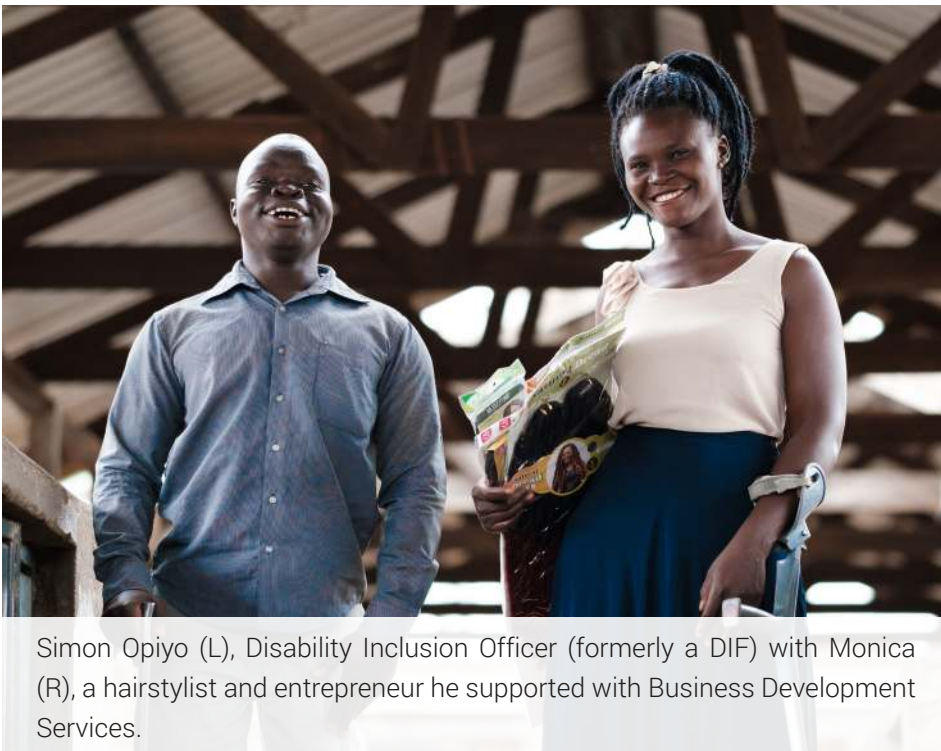
## DIFs in Inclusive Employment

The [Inclusion Works](#) programme, implemented by a consortium led by Sightsavers and funded by the DFID UK Aid Connect fund, aims at fostering the inclusion of persons with disabilities in formal employment. The programme in Uganda, through a collaboration with the Make 12.4% Work initiative, trained DIFs to support programme implementation. Following their training and certification, DIFs were hired as staff of OPDs in their districts.

## DIFs in Inclusive Business Development Support

The Mainstreaming Ambition - Vulnerable Youth in Business implemented by Light for the World Uganda, aims at facilitating access to employment; in both the formal and informal sector for young women and men with disabilities. The programme builds on proven practices for employment generation and self-employment programmes identified in the Make 12.4% Work Initiative. One of the pathways to employment explored under the programme promotes access to work through self-employment. Youth with disabilities are organised in enterprise groups and are provided Business Development Support services through DIFs as well as finance literacy training from Standard Chartered Bank. These trainings empower youth with disabilities to be able to choose and set up sustainable, thriving businesses.

DIFs, through the extra skills they gain in Business Development Support, are also able to earn more income through providing these professional services, resulting in a greater sense of job security and satisfaction.



Simon Opiyo (L), Disability Inclusion Officer (formerly a DIF) with Monica (R), a hairstylist and entrepreneur he supported with Business Development Services.

Learn more about Monica's story and how the Business Development Services she received from Simon enabled her economic recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic



Scan QR code or [use this link](#) to read Monica's story

## DIFs in Inclusive Land Rights and Governance

We Are Able! is a project implemented in Uganda, Ethiopia, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Sudan run in a consortium led by ZOA. The project is designed to empower, amplify voices, and create resilience among persons with disabilities and other excluded groups, particularly those faced with food insecurity in areas of protracted crises. We Are Able! also provides a platform where different actors have access to information on disability inclusion, including referrals, tools, resources, and opportunities as well as meaningful engagements and interactions on key issues affecting persons with disabilities. DIFs in the We Are Able! Programme in Uganda and South Sudan are central to the programme implementation; contributing to multi-stakeholder engagement, supportive monitoring on inclusion action plans drawn by actors targeted by the project and engaging in a range of awareness raising activities on land rights and inclusive governance.

*The [Disability Inclusion] Academy has taught me that as persons with disabilities, we are able to identify the solutions to the different challenges we face. This requires us to be solution-bearers so that we can easily identify what we need from different supporters to improve our social and economic standards.*

**Jennifer (2021)**



Jennifer, a DIF from Nwoya District, northern Uganda, supporting the We Are Able! programme



Grace, a farmer and entrepreneur, selling maize at a market. She received Business Development Support Services from Okello Denish, a DIF from her home district of Gulu, northern Uganda.

## DIFs in Inclusive Rural Economies

The “[Sparkling Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation](#)” (SPARK) programme implemented by Light for the World, International Labour Organisation and Procasur, uses a systemic action learning approach to impact the lives of at least 7,000 persons with disabilities within selected existing IFAD-funded programmes in Mozambique, Burkina Faso, India and Malawi. This approach will enable persons with disabilities to become fully engaged in the economic activities of selected agricultural and pastoral value chains. The project also raises awareness on the potential, aspirations and needs of persons with disabilities to their communities and other stakeholders such as civil society organisations, governments and private sector actors. DIFs are central to supporting awareness raising of disability within IFAD’s implementing partners and stakeholders, sparking more inclusive projects, and supporting persons with disabilities in accessing support networks and services.



\*Figures as of August 2022





Scan QR code or [use this link](#) to read Musa's story

Musa, a Disability Inclusion Advisor (formerly a DIF), takes an orientation session for students of the Certificate course on Personal Assistant Services for Persons with Disabilities that he pioneered at Kyambogo University, Kampala.

# Impact

In four years of the Make 12.4% Work Initiative, 151 mainstream actors including 73 development organisations, 63 companies, 10 educational institutions and 1 ministry committed to disability inclusion through signing up as members. 3,231 people were trained, including staff and higher management of companies and development organisations, through sessions on disability awareness and Disability Inclusive Programming. 468 persons with disabilities were supported directly by Make 12.4% Work through soft skills training, 'incubator projects', work placements and COVID-19 skills development activities, and 7,087 persons with disabilities were included by member organisations and companies in livelihood projects and skills development programmes. These achievements were made possible through the work of Disability Inclusion Facilitators who were core to each element of the Initiative and spearheaded most of the activities done.

The Impact of the Initiative at programme, organisational and system level has been extensively covered in the [Impact Report](#) produced. This learning brief zooms in on the impact at individual level for the DIFs and the people trained on disability awareness.

## Increased Confidence and Self-Esteem

Several aspects of the DIF approach have proven to increase the confidence and self-esteem of the Disability Inclusion Facilitators. The act of being selected, going through the training and mentorship process, getting certified and the numerous work experiences gained through the programme have proven to DIFs that they are capable young people, who now have a specific skill set. This confidence has had a ripple effect through to all other aspects of the DIFs' lives as well as in their communities. DIFs report that their gained confidence will enable them to further their careers and personal growth. Interacting with DIFs through different program activities and mentorship processes, also increases the confidence and self-esteem of the young persons with disabilities participating in the program.



Christine Kirungi, a former DIF, now the Executive Director of Uganda National Association of Cerebral Palsy (UNAC)

*“Before I used to think that no one cares about my opinion, but now I feel free to participate and to let the audience know about my opinion, both when I am okay with or not happy about something. I know I have the capacity to make decisions because now, people listen to me and even consult from me unlike before where I had no audience and no opportunities to air out my views.*

**Christine (2020)**

## Growth of Networks

The personal, professional and social networks of the DIFs grew over the course of the programme. The network and community of practice developed with the DIFs themselves had a notable impact as they found both professional support and a social community of other persons with disabilities from it. Such networks contribute significantly to the quality of life for the individual.

*“Being a DIF drastically increased the amount of people I engage with both personally and professionally.*

**Muzamil Alli (2022)**



Simon Opiyo (L) and Muzamil Alli (R) both formerly DIFs, now employed as Disability Inclusion Officers.

## Financial Independence

DIFs earn a professional or consultancy fee for activities they do. This affords them a living wage out of their work and often makes them the breadwinners in their families. This not only gives the DIFs and their families a more financially secure daily life, but also positively influences their families' education, health and social participation. It should be noted that DIFs are not hired as staff but contracted as consultants or service providers and remunerated as such. Outside of DIF work, the creation of networks and acquisition of unique skills has opened new opportunities for waged employment. Several DIFs are also successful entrepreneurs, investing their professional fees in businesses of their own.

*I have a family that I ably take care of. I accomplish my tasks to the fullest. I have quite a lot that I am proud of. I have accomplished much.*

**Musa (2020)**

## Becoming Role Models

DIFs take the task of becoming role models and agents of change seriously. Their drive highlights the passion for disability inclusion that they have developed. For the DIFs, the work they perform is not only an income generating activity, but provides them with a sense of purpose and gives them the opportunity to be valued for their contributions, something which is limited for many persons with disabilities in Uganda and around the world.

*When helping to place persons with disabilities into internships, I become a role model for other persons with disabilities and this makes me feel good and increases my self-esteem.*

**Dorcus (2022)**



Dorcus (R), a DIF, with Gloria (L) during a supportive monitoring visit to Gloria while going through her work experience placement.



## **Mindset Change towards Disability**

For staff of member development organisations and companies, engaging with DIFs is often their first interaction with persons with disabilities in a professional setting. This has greatly aided in broadening their perspectives on disability and positively changed their mindset towards persons with disabilities. Hosting Work Experience Placements for young job seekers with disabilities has also resulted in them experiencing the abilities of persons with disabilities firsthand, and learning practically how to effectively include them in their workplaces, thus increasing their confidence to continue hiring and offering other opportunities to them.

*The biggest lesson is that we wrongly judge persons with disabilities. There are so many things that the [DIFs] shared about disability inclusion that people without impairments do not consider. For instance, the attitude towards persons with disabilities; that they can not manage or deliver anything. However with the Facilitators we have interacted with, they conducted all sessions perfectly, have good content knowledge and are very friendly.*

***Sarah, Human Resource and Administration Manager***

***Foundation for Justice and Development Initiatives (FJDI) (2020)***



Jonathan, a DIF, during a Disability Inclusion Academy

# Lessons Learned

In four years of the Make 12.4% Work Initiative, the DIF Approach and its scaling, a number of lessons have been learned from successes gained and challenges experienced. The lessons highlighted in this section focus on the set up of the DIF approach, the Disability Inclusion Academy, mentorship process, engagement of DIFs in advisory work as well as sustainability strategies. Lessons learned from other elements of Make 12.4% Work such as private sector engagement, building inclusive livelihood programming and preparation of young persons with disabilities for the world of work have been extensively covered in the [Impact Report](#) produced.



Scan QR code to view and download the impact report

## Extended Training and Mentorship yields better qualified DIFs

The need to extend the training and mentorship period from 3-9 months was realised over the course of the programme. As a result, the approach has been adapted in all subsequent programmes to allow the DIFs to be mentored for longer before certification. In conjunction with this change, a formal assessment rubric has been developed and rolled out, allowing DIFs and mentors to accurately assess what stage they are at in their training, and pinpoint specific areas for improvement.

## Career Development Pathways: Disability Inclusion Technical Support is a Professional Service and needs to be valued as such

Additional pathways for DIF career development need to be incorporated into programming as this is crucial for both the retention of DIFs and building the level of consistent quality that is needed to meet the demand for technical disability inclusion advisory services. Doing this not only increases the passion that DIFs have for the work that they do, but also lends to sustainability as the more highly skilled DIFs get, reaching levels such as DIF Coordinator/Mentor or Disability Inclusion Advisor, the more programmes and organisations can be supported on disability inclusion. Certified DIFs also require to be regarded as professionals and offered the full benefits that providing advisory or consultancy services come with.

*Being a Disability Inclusion Facilitator has been vital in building my capacity. It helped to build my self-esteem to really put inclusion into action. My decision to run for the LC3 [Local Council] position came from the empowerment I received. I have had experiences with organisations and companies, but we have never had a Disability Inclusion Facilitator participating as a part of the government.*

*I would like to give all the councilors in my district Disability Awareness Training to ensure that we have the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all council activities, but they can only do that when they have the knowledge.*

Scan QR code or [click this link](#) to view Robert's Story.



Robert Ssewagudde, a DIF in Kampala, was elected for a political position in his home district of Busukuma.



## The development of DIFs is a collaborative effort

DIFs and OPD representatives work in complementary ways to create a more inclusive world. The DIF model in itself is a strategy to strengthen OPDs, aiding their mandates and advocacy efforts, and the adoption of the DIF model by OPDs is the eventual goal -- to be emphasised in all subsequent scaling up efforts. Other development partners and disability expert organisations involved in the development of DIFs also offer skills and expertise that are valuable to the model. Developing a strong partnership between these different actors as well as a clear establishment of roles is critical; this has a direct influence on the career development of DIFs, in the quality of service provided and the impact they create.

*The DIF [model] has far reaching benefits: Knowledge enhancement among youth and persons with disabilities; increased linkages to employment opportunities, services, and programmes; tools for increasing disability awareness on the great scale; empowerment of OPDs and District Unions; and improved livelihoods of DIFs.*

**Deborah Iyute, Programme Officer - NUDIPU (2023)**



Deborah Iyute (L) hands over an award to Conny Adoch (R), a DIF in Lira, northern Uganda. Conny received a Disability Inclusion Champion award during the endline event of Make 12.4% Work.

## ICT Access and Skills enhance the professional growth of DIFs

DIFs need ICT skills and access to technology to succeed. While DIFs are given smart phones to enable them to perform their professional tasks, there is a need to ensure that the technology and skills they are equipped with match the demands of working within the growing digital landscape. This might require extra training on the use of certain software packages, applications and different assistive technologies, both for their own use and to enhance their advisory work.



Conny Adoch training a new cohort of DIFs in her district. She also serves as a DIF Coordinator and Mentor.

## Continuous Development of Resources supports DIF Growth and Professional development

As DIFs engage with different actors across civil society, the private sector and government, a number of demands arise, sometimes beyond the existing capacity of DIFs, but not out of scope of the advisory services that they offer. The continuous creation of tools, additional training and mentorship on these emerging areas of need will enable DIFs to stay ahead of the curb and deliver better support, as well as aid their career development. In some cases, OPDs serve as resource support in regard to the legal frameworks on disability inclusion as a strategy of empowering DIFs with knowledge on laws and policies. A team dedicated to working with DIFs to develop these resources and refine existing ones to adequately meet their needs and respond to new opportunities is necessary.



## The Supply and Demand for Technical Disability Inclusion Advisory Services

The DIF approach can be challenged by its own success. As the DIFs create the demand for support on disability inclusion, it is imperative that there are DIFs ready to meet this demand. If DIFs are not able to deliver on their commitments, this may lead to disappointments and can have a larger negative effect. Perpetuating a perception of a disability sector which is not able to effectively support system change for a more inclusive society.

## Developing a Sense of Community motivates DIFs

Fostering a sense of community amongst the DIFs enhances their work and passion, as DIFs are able to support each other and grow as a team. The comradery built between the DIFs helps to build their confidence, maintain a sense of ownership over a programme, and increases the likelihood that they will want to stay active. Investing in both social and professional activities to enhance this community building is essential.



DIFs together with Light for the World and Reach a Hand Uganda staff during a programme activity.



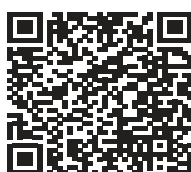
# Related Publications and Resources

Click on the images or links, or scan the QR codes to view or download



[Video: Make 12.4% Work Endline Event Highlights](#)

Make 12.4% Work [Impact Report](#)



[Make 12.4% Work](#) is implemented by Light for the World, the [National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda \(NUDIPU\)](#) and [Reach a Hand Uganda \(RAHU\)](#), funded by the [National Lottery Community Fund](#). For more information, contact: [a.murangira@light-for-the-world.org](mailto:a.murangira@light-for-the-world.org)

[Light for the World](#) is a global disability and development organisation aiming to contribute to an inclusive society where no one is left behind. Our mission is to contribute to a world in which persons with disabilities fully exercise their rights in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goals. Persons with disabilities living in poverty are amongst the most excluded groups in society. They are at the center of our work, and they drive the change. For more information on Light for the World's work, visit: <https://www.light-for-the-world.org/>



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