IDS Action Learning Groups with Jobseekers and Employers involved in the Inclusion Works Programme

A report on the process and findings

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1.   Introduction

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) originally proposed the idea of running a series of action learning groups with jobseekers and employers involved with the Inclusion Works (IW) programme. This is a participatory way of learning over time about these participants' experiences of the IW programme and their wider perceptions of the world of work and moves towards more inclusive practice generally in the four IW countries: Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda.[1]

IDS's role as a research partner in the consortium within the IW programme was to promote and demonstrate innovative, inclusive, qualitative ways of generating evidence about the programme. This aimed to encourage partners within the consortium to use more participatory, collaborative and power equalising methods across all activities, both with staff teams working within the four countries and the global level partners. IDS has a strong commitment to and tradition of using participatory and inclusive methods of enquiry. We believe that although collecting robust quantitative data about many aspects of the programme and its wide range of interventions and activities is crucial for monitoring and evaluation purposes, it is only through carrying out more in-depth qualitative research with participants that we will understand more about the nuance of what works and what doesn't, why and how, in promoting inclusive employment in the context of middle- and low-income countries. The aspiration to develop more inclusive employment in the four countries is an aim that fits with global initiatives towards a more inclusive world for people with disabilities, as promoted by the Sustainable Development Goals (no 8) and the UN CRPD (article 27). However it is not straightforward and we aimed to understand and unravel some of the complexity in the inclusive employment arena through seeking out diverse perspectives on it.

Why did we choose Action Learning Groups as our method?

IDS is committed to participatory methods as a way to explore people's situations, and this is a broad and well-established way of working, being used across a wide range of types of projects, particularly in the international development sector. Participation in this context has a meaning that encompasses ideas about making sure everyone, whatever their status and identity can join in, that the voices of the most marginalised are heard, that power gradients (e.g. between different participants and also between researcher/facilitators and participants) are reduced so that no one feels they cannot speak. It aims that in the analysis and reporting all contributions are treated with respect and are included in the conclusions and recommendations. Participatory methods often include creative methods which may take the emphasis off talking, reading and writing, and encourage other forms of expression. Participation and action research approaches often also imply that the participants are involved in many (if not all) of the stages of the research process, so

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[1] For more detailed information about the Inclusion Works programme, a 3-year FCDO funded programme lead by international disability INGO Sightsavers, with a consortium of other partners, as part of the wider FCDO Inclusive Futures initiative (2018-2022). https://inclusivefutures.org

that the research is run 'with them' not 'on' them. They are participants, not subjects of the research!

It should perhaps be noted that 'participation' as a concept within the disability discourse has a different though related meaning to that described above in relation to research. In the disability arena it is linked to definitions of disablement (WHO 2002) and the concepts and ideals in the UNCRPD (2007). The idea of 'meaningful' participation, as opposed to being tokenistic, has been used for many years in the wider participation literature and has now been taken on as important in the disability community too. Clearly, methods of participatory and action research are particularly suitable for research with people with disabilities as they are so often excluded and marginalised in their communities and from 'mainstream' research.

Participatory Action research (PAR)

Participatory action research as an approach has a long and varied history of being used as a research method, particularly in community orientated international development activities. It also often overlaps with more participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning activities and aims. Many researchers and practitioners are attracted to it because it emphasises the views and perspectives of the those 'on the ground' who are participating in whatever the intervention activities are. Essentially it emphasises understanding those people's experiences and views, in order that any future actions will be adapted and informed by what they say and will be truly responsive to their feedback and recommendations. Indeed, ideally the participants will be actively involved in bringing out the needed changes. PAR ensures that:

> *Respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process, a belief in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change, and a commitment to action. (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003 p15)*

Action learning groups

Action learning groups are a specific approach and are different from the more common and better-known method of Focus Group Discussions (which are usually one-off engagements with people, often used in qualitative research). Action learning groups (sometimes called action learning sets) are a specific type of group discussion. Members of an action learning group have something in common with each other (e.g. their work setting or role, their situation) and they agree to meet together regularly (e.g. once every month or two) to discuss issues that they agree on discussing. Other external people do not join or observe action learning groups, as they are created to be confidential, closed and safe spaces, where members can feel secure that their discussions will be private. Action learning groups normally have a facilitator, who supports and helps to structure the discussion, but does not set the agenda, except perhaps initially. They keep notes and arrange logistics and ensure that everyone is able to participate equally. The chance for everyone to talk and to feel free to express their views, as well as to listen and learn from others are important elements of the groups. Action learning groups can sometimes continue over several years. The idea is that as the same people meet each time, they get to

know and trust each other and the conversation and topics discussed evolves over time. Sometimes it can be agreed that a meeting focuses on a particular individuals' situation or challenges, other meetings can be a discussion of a number of issues arising from the group members. Therefore, an action learning group is about both individual and group learning and ideally linked to actions in the real world. Groups may identify an issue that needs exploration outside the group and may agree that a subsequent meeting they will bring information/experience to share and reflect on.

Action Learning Groups as part of Inclusion Works

We felt that as the IW programme was going to run over a 3-year period and both jobseekers and employers would be involved in various activities over this time, it would be interesting to get this longitudinal and evolving but also personal picture of what went on, how well it worked, how and why. Gathering lessons learned and recommendations for future inclusive employment initiatives was seen as an important biproduct of these groups.

Figure 1: Process of action learning

Action learning is the process of bringing thinking and action into harmony. Learning is a continuous process and is best achieved with an open, probing mind, an ability to listen, question and explore ideas.

Through reflection, we gain a deeper understanding of the issues we face. This enables us to manage change more effectively, and meet the challenges we face.

Through working in action learning sets, we bring together diverse peers or people from within the same organisation to work through issues, share ideas and challenge perceptions in a trusting, supportive environment.

Source: Authors' own - adapted from Mumford, 1996

As the image above indicates, action learning groups are therefore seen 'to provide a group vehicle for the discussion of problems' (Mumford 1996 p3).

A key feature is a relational approach which attends to individuals' subjective experiences as well as the commonalities found within the group. The skills and attitudes of the facilitator are important, as they support and encourage, but are not seen as providing solutions or as setting the agenda. The members of the group 'own' its content and to a large extent control what happens.

Lastly it is important to note that we deliberately thought about how to make sure that the action learning groups were inclusive of people with different types and severities of impairment. We did not want to exclude anyone and thought about how different suggested activities that might be done in the group meetings could be suitable for everyone, no matter what their access needs.

Thus our research approach is qualitative and ongoing, it is action orientated, participatory and most importantly disability inclusive.

What did we do?

Recruitment and training of facilitators

During late 2019 we recruited one action learning facilitator for each IW country. These were not necessarily people who had experience of action learning groups (ALGs) specifically, but had some knowledge of qualitative research, of running groups (e.g. community or advocacy groups or conventional focus groups discussions) and also had some experience of working on disability or other types of marginalisation.

The four facilitators came together with the four IDS research team members for a 4-day training workshop in Uganda in December 2019.[2]

The workshop covered the following aspects: theoretical and practical aspects of disability (e.g. the social model, UNCRPD, impairment and identity, reasonable accommodation, inclusion tips), ethics and safeguarding, participatory action research, action learning groups and facilitation of group work, creative methods, group planning, dealing with sensitive issues and group dynamics, record keeping and reporting etc. The group practiced various components of running groups together including a variety of activities as well as becoming familiar with reporting formats etc.

Ethics processes

The IDS team prepared a submission to the IDS ethics committee which was approved and also worked with Sightsavers to prepare ethics applications within the countries where these were needed. Information sheets and consent processes for participants were drafted and translated into local languages as required.

What happened?

There were three action learning groups in each country, two for jobseekers (with priority given to women only groups and youth groups), and one group for employers involved in the IW programme (apart from in Nigeria where it was not possible to establish an employers group). The exact nature of the groups and how they were convened varied across the countries.

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[2] This included our original facilitator in Bangladesh, Fatema Akter, who was then replaced by Sayma Sayed. Fatema facilitated the first women's and youth group, before Sayma took over and facilitated the rest. Sayma's training was completed virtually by the IDS team and in person by Fatema.

Figure 2: Types of groups across the IW countries
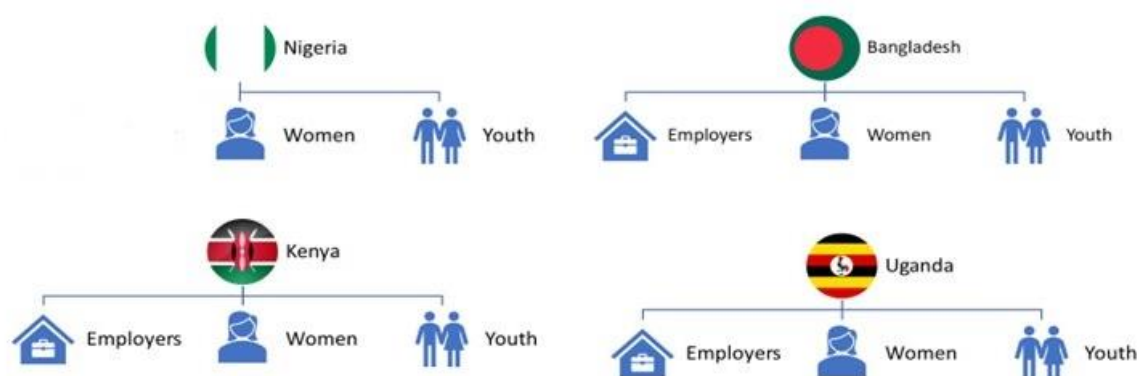
Source: Authors' own

The IDS team worked closely with the IW in-country partners to recruit and invite possible members of the groups, both jobseekers and employers. The action learning facilitators and IDS teams were in regular contact with the programme Country Implementation Groups (CIGs) so that everyone was aware of the development of the groups, but also so that the ALG facilitators knew about other activities and events going on in the country in relation to the IW programme.

The original plan was for each group to meet every two months for two years of the programme, so that there was an opportunity for long term engagement between the group members and an opportunity for the development of their discussions over time as the programme evolved and their own involvement developed at different points.

However this plan was severely delayed because of some consortium misunderstandings and concerns about the purpose and process of ALGs. These were mainly around an expectation that the ALG meetings would be attended by Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPD) representatives, however we made it clear that the action learning group methodology explicitly emphasises the closed and private nature of the groups, and that having other visitors or observers might change the dynamic and confidence of the members to express themselves freely. These misunderstandings were eventually resolved.

Another delay then appeared and this was the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions applied (differently in each country). This meant that face to face meetings were no longer possible (although some groups had had one initial physical meeting before this). The meetings then had to move to an online virtual mode, which had its own challenges. These will be discussed briefly below.

Table showing the numbers of participants (male and female) and numbers of meetings of each type in each country

		No. of members	No. of meetings
Bangladesh	Women's group	10	6
	Youth group	10	6
	Employer's group	8	3
Uganda	Women's group	9	4
	Youth group	9 (4 M, 5 F)	5
	Employer's group	9 (3 M, 6 F)	4
Kenya	Women's group	13	3
	Youth group	6 (4 M, 2 F)	7
	Employer's group	2	3
Nigeria	Women's group	10	5
	Youth group	10 (9 for virtual)	5
	Employer's group	0	0

Participants were drawn from those signed up to a range of the activities that were part of the IW programme of interventions. They had a range of types of impairments, although those with intellectual and complex impairments are poorly represented in the programme and hence in these groups. Gender balance was broadly achieved, although of course the women's groups were 100% female in membership.

The action learning facilitators had regular individual check-ins with their contact person in the IDS team as well as regular team check-in meetings, where progress with convening meetings and an overview of the topics discussed in the meetings was discussed. Support and problem-solving was part of the process.

COVID-19 related research

When the potential impact of COVID-19 and related lockdowns and restrictions in all countries started to emerge, some of Inclusion Works activities were 'flexed' to respond to the pandemic. Some partners switched to COVID-19 relief work. IDS diverted some resources to some COVID-19 related work, working with the same team of facilitators to undertake online interviews with people with disabilities to explore their experience of the pandemic using narrative interviews. These have been reported separately[3].

Reporting about the work

As well as regular internal consortium reporting about progress with the groups (e.g. to the CIGs and for quarterly funder reports), the action learning group work has been reported at several conferences and live events. Here the methodology and preliminary findings have been presented to academic and practitioner audiences

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[3] Please click on country name to follow link to the relevant COVID-19 report: Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda. Executive summaries are available in easy read and local languages.

both within and beyond the IW consortium community (e.g. London School of Hygiene conference 2019, IW community of practice March 2022).

Some limitations and challenges in the process

Any type of research has its limitations and the action learning group is no exception. Obviously in comparison with a big quantitative survey or online questionnaire, the data gathered in a qualitative study like this is about a much smaller cohort of people. However this is balanced by its depth and nuance. Thus we have detailed and personal information collected over time about a small number of participants.

Particular to the time when this research took place were two major disruptions to our plans. First the COVID-19 pandemic which drastically affected the type of meetings that could be held and arrangements were also affected by team members (or families) illness or health concerns and priorities. Additionally our funder the UK FCDO rolled out cuts to the programme budget which affected our overall IDS spend and the flexibility we had to make adapted arrangements.

An initial challenge for us in relation to planning this type of research was the task of establishing understanding in the consortium that this kind of methodology had a history and legitimacy in the qualitative research canon. We found that we had to explain this on numerous occasions and felt that we were having to justify something that is already well recognised in the research community. There was sometimes a confusion between our research aims and those of the MEL needs for the programme. Clearly the action learning group data could inform and contribute to MEL but this was not its main purpose from our perspective as researchers. We wanted to understand the participants' experience as shedding light on attitudes to inclusive employment in a broader way, not just in relation to the consortium's interventions.

A further challenge for the team was that when analysing and reporting on the data we had to balance interpreting the members' contributions which fed back on their specific experiences of the programme with their broader reflections and aspirations which often signalled wanting something different, that the programme couldn't offer.

Lastly it is useful to remember that qualitative (and also other!) research does not set out to arrive at one definitive answer to a problem! This is particularly true when considering an issue as complex as inclusive employment, and where other concerns such as poverty, unequal gender relations, stigma and discrimination are entrenched. The data was never going to provide a clear solution to the many dilemmas raised. However, the analysis of the discussions does provide some key and recurring themes and insights. We looked for patterns within and across groups, and countries – similarities of experience and differences which might be useful to the programme or more broadly in context of inclusive employment.

2.   Findings

The key themes and issues in each country are covered first, and then a summary of the aspects which arose in the different types of groups across countries are presented. Finally, an overview of the main themes and key messages throughout are discussed.

Country reports

Kenya

> *Nothing is impossible if you try. Unless you try something, you cannot know whether it will succeed or not. So, every opportunity that comes, give it a try if you can. From these meetings I have learnt not to let people recognise me by my disability but my abilities. (Youth group member)*

Youth involvement in the ALGs was from a mixed group of six young people who were involved in the in-person soft skills training prior to the first lockdowns and virtual training during the pandemic. COVID-19 had affected their employment plans and they were doing a mix of employment, self-employment, and job-searching. Skills training and mentoring support from the programme had built up people's skills and confidence and had helped some to secure work. The group has interests they are passionate about and specific areas they want to work on as a result, and this was not always being satisfied by the opportunities they were being presented with. The group was a supportive environment for them to receive encouragement and knowledge helpful for their journey towards (self) employment. They felt that sustainability of the programme was important and that the knowledge they gained from their involvement in the programme could be helpful for their wider networks and should be shared further with people with disabilities who were not involved in the programme. Those who have gained employment are felt to be important role models for changing attitudes towards the employment of persons with disabilities. Reasonable accommodation needs to consider the emotional aspects as well as the physical.

Women's involvement in the ALGs was from a group of thirteen women enrolled in the IT Bridge Academy Training being done at National Industrial Training Authority (NITA). The women had a range of previous experience of employment and unemployment and approached work as something that was both done to earn your livelihood and as something that could fulfil goals or your passions, while acknowledging that not all work (like childcare) was paid. They were generally enjoying their training, although there were some reasonable accommodation concerns beyond just the classroom but also encompassing the accommodation they were staying in. Some of these concerns were addressed over the time the group met after involvement of IW staff. Most felt that there is need for more respect and understanding across the different individuals and for their disability within the classrooms. Many were worried about finding work after their exams, with some also worried about what attitudes to them might be, especially as they were not confident

in interacting with new people, with networking being so important to finding work. However, all secured an internship with Safaricom that they were both happy and anxious about. They feel progress on disability inclusion is being made, with people with disabilities no longer hidden away or seen just as beggars. The support of the group was appreciated.

Employer involvement in the ALGs was drawn from two employers in hospitability and the media. The reasons for engagement with the IW programme and the employment of persons with disabilities ranged from personal (family member with a disability), to raised awareness of disability through contact with people with disabilities, to top down (head office was brought on board and mandated involvement in the IW programme). Through exposure to people with disabilities at work, employers realised what people with disabilities are capable of and see potential for further employment of additional people with disabilities. They recognised that cultures within certain industries do contribute to employers' hesitance about onboarding persons with disability e.g. perfection in the hospitality industry and a misguided belief that persons with disability would not be able to deliver on it. The employers acknowledged that their mindset needed to change, as did that of wider society. For employers, this could possibly mean that key business commitments e.g. business strategy/focus, articles of associations need to include inclusion commitments.

Uganda

Youth involvement in the ALGs was mainly drawn from one of the unique initiatives in Uganda, the Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs), who were trained to educate employers about disability inclusion. Eight of the nine youth group participants were DIFs. Many had personally experienced negative attitudes from employers, especially when applying for jobs. Access to information about job opportunities was harder for those living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. Many also felt that they missed out on job opportunities because they lacked vital job skills, especially in relation to ICT. However, offering training/technical support without conducting a needs assessment with people with disabilities may miss providing the support that's really needed. In addition, they noted that getting a job is not the same as being able to keep a job, due to difficulties with accessibility in workplaces. Involvement in the programme had increased their confidence and they appreciated how the feedback they were given improved their performance. Although they can be hard to approach due to various power dynamics, the employers they encounter in their work as DIFs are willing but lack understanding about the 'how' of disability inclusion, especially reasonable accommodation. They suggested that careers fairs, where jobseekers with disabilities and employers could meet could be useful. The group members had concerns about the sustainability of the programme, the follow up with employers, and what happens in relation to their DIF positions.

Women's involvement in the ALG were nine women who are involved in a village and loans saving group, with two thirds also involved in the online Accenture skills training programme. They had had little opportunity to gain job skills as they rarely found out about any relevant opportunities, which were often not provided in the

formats and language that was accessible to them. The programme's perceived focus on waged employment rather than self-employment (which many women wanted more skills in), and minimum educational requirements that they felt employers were demanding was felt to disadvantage them, and they experienced additional discrimination as women. However, they appreciated the business skills that the programme provided to them later on, although they struggled to get through to the next stage when applying for the Innovation Challenge Fund[4]. In addition, almost half of the women struggled to get their partner's permission to do things out of the home, which limited their opportunities. Lack of access to technology meant the women struggled to participate freely in the ALG and in the Accenture training. The women were mutually supportive and had cascaded relevant knowledge gained from Accenture and elsewhere to others outside the programme who did not have the opportunity to participate (because of lack of access to smart phones or low education levels, for example) which helped improve their chances of finding employment too. Gaining skills and participating in the group helped increase their confidence and some women had started a business. However, many women with disabilities in their area were still missing out as the training wasn't in local dialects and was only available online, and the women were unsure about how to gain the experience asked for in job applications.

Employers in the ALG are all members of the Uganda Business and Disability Network (UBDN), although most were in the beginning stages of their journey of employing persons with disabilities, with some still unsure about how possible it will be and having several fears about the practicalities of inclusion. The nine employers were drawn from a range of small and medium enterprises in a variety of sectors, mainly hospitality. Support was being provided to them by the programme's Disability Inclusion Facilitators. There was a feeling that real life contact with people with a diverse range of disabilities themselves (role models) was better than virtual examples of what was possible. Understandings of reasonable accommodation were not uniform, and some felt it was too onerous and expensive, while others felt it was effective and needed a dedicated budget put towards it. There were difficulties in making adaptions in relation to rented premises. The sharing of experiences was valuable for the members of the group to learn about what was possible, what had worked for others, and to change people's minds and move towards disability inclusion. They felt that consistent support/check-ups and open discussion with employees with disabilities about any modifications needed was important in ensuring they were working in an inclusive way, as well as recording data on their interactions with persons with disabilities. They wanted to be involved at the programme design stage.

Bangladesh

The youth group comprised ten people who had received training, been involved in a learning exchange and/or attended job interviews through Inclusion Works. The

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[4] The Innovation Challenge Fund is a partnership with Standard Chartered Bank Uganda, Sightsavers, under Inclusive Futures and the Inclusion Works project in Uganda ADD International, Light for the World, Challenges Uganda, and the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda. It sought to attract entrepreneurial ideas from youth with disabilities (18 to 35 years old) that address social problems within communities.

members felt the programme was doing a good job improving learning about the Disability Act, delivering training and strengthening the CVs of candidates. Location of work and accessibility were cited as continuing challenges to employment for people with disabilities. Also, negative attitudes towards people with disabilities continues to be a major barrier. More advocacy was cited as a way to change employers' negative views or attitudes towards candidates with disabilities. The youth group also felt that people with visual impairment faced significant and particular challenges when trying to get jobs. Training must be needs based. Hard skills training as well as soft skills training is required. Some participants complained of undertaking skills training but not receiving any formal recognition or certification at the end to show what they had done. They could not then show prospective employers that they had undergone the training. People with disabilities themselves should be asked about what they need. Members felt there were missed opportunities for people with disabilities to participate and contribute to intervention planning. Some members felt that if they had easier access to assistive devices than this would improve their chances of being employed[5]. There was discussion about the importance of matching job offers to education level. For example, participants with higher education may not want to undertake low skilled jobs in the ready-made garment sector. Better matching between supply and demand of jobs is needed. Also, some members wanted to set up their own businesses, rather than be employed. These members did not feel that they had been supported through the programme to do this[6]. The group members felt they knew very well what the challenges were with regards to inclusive employment in Bangladesh but that they did not have all the answers, and this was frustrating.

The women's group was made up of ten women with disabilities, but for most meetings only seven were present. The education level of the members was varied. Three members had experience of higher education and were more confident applying for jobs. The remainder had no or limited education and were less confident. All members had interacted with the programme, including receiving soft skills training, participating in online learning exchange sessions and attending organised visits to employers. The soft skills training was found to be very useful to participants, with one reporting getting a job as a direct impact. Some concern was raised at the lack of connection between training and actual employment opportunities. The networking opportunities and confidence building associated with the exchanges and visits were appreciated. The importance to the group of building connections came across very strongly. The group liked to share experiences via the action learning group and found they could support each other. Public sector jobs were preferred due to the security these bring. The group felt that people with intellectual disabilities faced significant and particular challenges when trying to get jobs. There was also reflection on the challenges of being a mother and also trying to get/keep a job. This is particularly challenging for women with young children. Another issue raised was that sometimes parents are overprotective of their

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[5] NB the programme did have some capacity to provide assistive devices, so it is not clear what the participant needed here

[6] Although the programme in Bangladesh did support large numbers of people on an entrepreneurship programme, so this view may not be representative of the larger group of programme participants

daughters with disabilities or do not believe that they could do work. Inaccessible transport networks were also discussed as a major challenge to being employed in Bangladesh.

> *I think, for disability inclusion, our organizational internal responsibility is most important. (Employer group member)*

The employer group was made up of five members, all of whom represented organisations that had an existing relationship with the Bangladesh Business Disability Network (BBDN). Unfortunately, despite encouraging recurring attendance, the membership of the group was fluid overtime, with new members joining and others only attending the initial meeting. To some extent, all members were already open to employing people with disabilities and were often sent CVs of potential candidates by BBDN, who formed an important connection between employer and prospective employee. The knowledge and experience of BBDN was regarded as key to the success of this endeavour. The relationship with BBDN was the main way employers engaged with inclusive employment. However, beyond this relationship, the group members did not have an awareness of broader development projects focused on this topic. Employers shared that one challenge they face is the location of jobs, which may not be desirable to applicants. They also reported that sometimes candidates were poorly prepared and did not know which position they were applying for. Opportunities to further support candidates at the pre-application stage were highlighted. Also, better coordination is needed with regards to skills demanded by the employer, skills obtained by the candidate and their willingness to take on different roles. Job seekers with certain impairments (physical) are preferred by employers, while other impairments (intellectual disability) make people seem unemployable by employers. People with different impairments face particular challenges. The employers recognise that more of a dialogue is needed regarding people with intellectual disabilities. The members found the action learning group useful for sharing experiences, challenges, learnings and recommendations.

Nigeria

> *Members of the society are mostly occupied with their ideas of what we cannot do. That is how people see us, so the things we can do come to them as surprises. This needs to change. (Youth Group member)*

This group was made up of ten youths with disabilities who lived in Kano, Nigeria. All the group members had participated in employability and Accenture Skills trainings. Two of the group had jobs already but wanted better jobs. The remaining eight were seeking employment. The group members had a preference for securing jobs in the public sector due to perceived job security and benefits such as pensions. However, it was noted that to gain employment in the public sector in Nigeria often is dependent on patronage or jobseekers having 'godfathers' in the system. Having connections and influence was reported as major factors in securing employment in Nigeria for young jobseekers. The education level of the group members was in general high, with the majority having higher education degrees, diplomas or

certificates, but despite this, the members struggled to secure the jobs they wanted. Education and skills development was regarded as essential by the group, but members expressed frustration with the fruitless effort of job searching. The group felt that negative discrimination continues to be a major challenge for young people with disabilities who want work. Many employers judge them on perceptions about what they can't do, rather than considering what they can do. Changes relating to stereotypes and preconceptions about jobseekers with disabilities are needed. The inaccessibility of infrastructure and transport was also reported as a challenge. The group felt limited by lack of funds to take ideas forward. They were also concerned about sustainability of the group in the longer term. Group opinions on the mentor scheme associated with the programme were mixed. Some members expressed disappointment with mentors as the relationship had not resulted in employment. The expectations between jobseeker and mentor were not always aligned, resulting in disappointment. In some cases, mentors had not delivered on their commitments. However, the majority of members indicated that their mentors have been supportive, despite the relationship not resulting in employment.

Most members report that without 'godfathers', it is nearly impossible to secure jobs in the public sector in Kano State. As such, there are opinions that mentors should mostly include senior civil servants (head of ministries, boards, commissions and agencies) and people who have connections with influential politicians in the state. Because the concept of godfathers is very common in Nigeria, it may be that the idea of mentors was conflated with this and thus the latters' role as offered by the programme was misunderstood.

> *Getting back to employers for feedback on why you were not hired is very difficult. You and I know that most of them will not tell you that it is because of your disability. (Women's group member)*

The women's group was made up of ten women with disabilities in Abuja (which is noted to have a relatively higher cost of living than most other parts of Nigeria). The majority of group members were unemployed. Those employed were hoping to secure improved jobs. All group members had enrolled as jobseekers in the programme and had participated in employability skills training by Sightsavers. The group found the training to be very useful to improve their CVs and it had given them confidence to apply for jobs. They had all been matched with a mentor, which was regarded as helpful to most members.

Group members reported that discrimination on the basis of disability continues to restrict opportunities. Such discrimination is often implicit, and it is very hard to get feedback from prospective employers. Employers who do employ people with disabilities often do it out of charity rather than due to the ability of the applicant. Awareness and advocacy of disability rights needs to increase. Members felt that there were opportunities for engagement with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, the federal and state civil service commissions to drive positive change. Some members reported the programme being instrumental in them securing employment. One member reported this was due to mentorship, another stated it was due to being connected through networks. The sentiment that

belonging to a network was very positive was shared by several members of the group, including some who had yet to secure employment. The women's group expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived focus of the programme on formal employment, as this was seen to limit options with regards to self-employment and becoming partners in 'start-up' companies (although it was not clear if this limitation was believed to have a worse impact on women or not).

Experiences relating to reasonable accommodation were found to be mixed. One group member had managed to secure a job, but the employer did not provide reasonable accommodation (in this case relating to procuring software), so the offer was withdrawn. Another group member reported securing a job and being adequately provided for by the employer. The group also expressed concern that some employers wanted to try and exploit jobseekers with disabilities by offering them less pay than non-disabled applicants for the same work, assuming that they were desperate and could be taken advantage of.

Some gender-related factors were also discussed. For example, marriage and child-bearing were reported to have a negative impact on job searching for women with disabilities. Some women have to move locations when they get married, making it harder to secure employment. Age limits on jobs or expectations around when education was completed also negatively affected women getting jobs. Worryingly, one member reported experiencing sexual harassment from a supposed potential employer when they approached them to try and find work[7]. The need for safeguarding of people with disabilities in work was highlighted as a priority.

Additional comment from the facilitator:

The women jobseekers' group also recommended expanding the training programme (that is for a future intervention) to meet specific job requirements. On one hand, they want an IT training that is more in-depth.

> *An example I imagine is a collaboration with Google Skills for Africa where job seekers are able to choose a number of courses from the gallery.*

On the other hand, they also talked about support to gain technical skills in respective professional areas. For example, a collaboration with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) can help prepare and register jobseekers for the Institute's various professional examinations. Mentors can also be enlisted from these professional bodies.

An employer group was not established in Nigeria. The action learning group facilitator tried to contact prospective members, but they were unresponsive.

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[7] Related to a previous incident with an employer outside of the IW programme.

3. Different types of group

Here we have collated the data from each type of group across the four countries.

Women's groups

> *We could have been trained and then when you look for employment, but there is a person without disability and they wonder why they should employ us. Not necessarily hand holding. I would love to see more employers being accommodative. Having a disability doesn't mean I am stupid and I cannot do a proper job. I would love to see more training programmes. (Women's group participant - Kenya)*

Across the four countries women with disabilities share similar experiences to people with disabilities in general, especially in relation to disability discrimination. However, as women with disabilities they also encounter gender discrimination and issues more specifically applicable to women than men. This places them at a disadvantaged position, in relation to men with disabilities and more broadly. These issues are present across the four countries to a greater or lesser extent.

Women with disabilities' perception was that they were disadvantaged by having low education attainments and were thus limited in their work or other opportunities within the IW programme and more broadly. However, there was no educational requirement to join the programme so perhaps they had experienced this barrier from employers directly? Lower levels of education also made it harder for them to access information about available opportunities. As girls with disabilities they had often started school later and struggled to be comprehensively educated. Therefore, they often had lower levels of education than men with disabilities.

Their domestic roles as mothers and wives were unpaid work that took a lot of time away from finding paid opportunities and could delay or halt their entry into the job market.

> *As a wife I have lots of household responsibilities. Besides that, I have a very young child. Although, I need a job; now, it is not possible for me to go outside for a job. (Women's group participant – Bangladesh)*

In addition, in Uganda some of the women had issues with getting their partners permission to get involved in the programme's activities as they were suspicious about what they were doing when they left the house. In Bangladesh, women with disabilities also faced restricted mobility as their families were reluctant for them to leave home, while those who did go out faced difficulties as women on public transport.

Access to information, especially in relation to finding relevant opportunities, including for training, was noted to be an issue in Uganda and Bangladesh, where women generally heard less about what was happening in their communities and the

job market than men. Women with disabilities seemed to generally have less access to smartphones and other opportunities to get online, which had negative effects on their participation. Lower levels of education and lack of information in local languages and accessible formats was also noted to hinder their access to information.

> *Some of us lack confidence to apply for jobs we are qualified for. In such situations, we do not believe we are fit for those positions, so we shy away from applying for them. (Women's group participant – Nigeria)*

> *I now have the confidence to try out since joining this group. Otherwise, I always treated myself with disregard. (Women's group participant - Uganda)*

Many women struggled with confidence issues, and sometimes even if they had been trained, they worried about finding work or being qualified enough. This stopped some women from trying to apply for jobs they were qualified for. The mutual support provided within the ALGs and other communal activities helped build the confidence of many these women, as did the greater knowledge they gained of job skills and disability rights through participation in the IW programme.

Some women mentioned that they would like more information and support in relation to self-employment, which may provide them with more flexibility and less need to travel far from home. Although it was noted that women often struggled to access the necessary credit to set up a business due to gender discrimination. As in the other groups, the women noted the importance of involving them from the beginning and tailoring the support and training provided to their needs and interests, as well as following through with career counselling and support after the training.

> *As a woman, I am not allowed to go far from my home. My family members do not like that. (Women's group participant – Bangladesh)*

Concerns about women's safety when going out to work were noted in Bangladesh, and this restricted women's mobility and opportunities. This was especially pronounced for women with communication issues. Sexual harassment in trying to find work and in the workplace, did not come up much in the other countries but was mentioned in Nigeria. This may be due to it being a sensitive topic about which not everyone is prepared to share their experiences.

Youth

Young people are rightly ambitious about their futures and passionate about their interests. Perhaps they are a generation who have reached adulthood in the era post the UNCRPD and other national disability legislation so have a stronger sense of their rights than older adults? However, some still expressed a lack of confidence and feelings of exclusion and inferiority.

In Uganda the youth group were drawn from a particular initiative linked to the IW programme, the Disability Inclusion Facilitators (Light for the World model), and so had had the benefit of some specific skills training around inclusion and the rights-based approach. Thus they were perhaps more confident and aware in their knowledge about rights and advocacy, but they still felt that their skill sets did not match exactly what was wanted in the open job market. There was a sense that advocating with powerful people in the jobs market was quite difficult, and countering stereotypes was challenging. There was also discussion about a fear of being conned and cheated in the process of trying to find a job and being wary of this.

Many of the young people had high levels of education and this is good to see, as they may be the product of more inclusive approaches to education in their generation. However, despite this they tended to feel frustrated that their efforts to gain qualifications had not paid off so far. The feeling that disability discrimination was still a major hurdle was common to all four countries' youth. There was a feeling that assumptions about their skills and capacities were based on stereotypes and that they were not given enough opportunities to 'prove themselves'. The 'catch 22' of needing experience but not being able to get it was common. Additionally the feeling of time being lost because of COVID-19 was common – when their studies or plans had been interrupted.

Although many of the members could speak English, there was a view that information should be more widely produced in other local languages as some people are disadvantage by a lack of exposure to English, especially if they did not attend school to completion.

Perhaps younger people are more skilled already and have had more exposure to soft skills so it is often not these they need so much as opportunities to try out jobs, i.e. through training placements, internships etc that are tailored to their interests and education levels. It was common for them to express wanting formal training that would lead more directly to particular jobs. They tended to be quite particular about not wanting to take a job that was below their skill level.

Needing to have someone to support them in their quest for work was mentioned, so that a mentor (and some had appreciated this opportunity as part of the programme) or a 'godfather' (in Nigeria) who could wield social capital and connections was felt to be crucial. This sense that getting a good job is dependent on networks of influence and possibly nepotism was not encouraging for those without such linkages. Of course we know that people with disabilities tend to have smaller social networks, but ideally getting a job should be on merit rather than through such connections. There was a sense that these networks were still a powerful factor.

The theme of having a preference for self-employment and running their own businesses was strong in the youth groups as it was in others. Members often expressed a desire for training in business development, entrepreneurial skills and marketing. This would avoid having to work with others who may be unreliable or discriminatory. However, there were also some concerns about the challenges of self-employment.

Many of the groups discussed how after the end of the groups they could continue to support each other and maintain the impetus of the meetings to share experiences and knowledge with each other in realising their ambitions. They also expressed interest in the ways that they as people with disabilities could influence programmes such as IW and get involved in the planning and implementation processes.

Employers

There were only employers groups in Uganda, Kenya, and Bangladesh as no participants could be persuaded to form a group in Nigeria.

Employers involved in the ALGs tended to already have some engagement with employees/applicants with disabilities, although their levels of commitment to and understanding of disability rights varied across and within countries. As all members of the groups already had some interaction with employees with disabilities, the views of employers yet to engage with inclusive employment are not represented.

All employers recognised that they need to do more to ensure inclusion. They recognise that there are wider societal and cultural discriminatory attitudes that need to be addressed, but that they as employers also needed to do more. Understandings of reasonable accommodation was found to vary dramatically among employers, as was willingness to pay for and provide it. 'Exposure' to employees with disabilities (contact theory) was shown to be an effective way to sensitise employers to the capacity and capability of people with disabilities. Real life practical experience of inclusive employment was found to be beneficial to both employers and employees and was much preferred to virtual experience. Sharing experience and learning from other employers was seen as vital for improving inclusivity going forwards. Employers found that being open to conversations and willing to start a dialogue about inclusive employment was important.

National Business and Disability Networks were shown to play an important role in Uganda and Bangladesh. These networks acted as bridging organisations to better connect employees with disabilities with employers who wanted to become more inclusive. The networks were seen has having real strength in that they understood the needs and demands of both the employers and employees, and therefore could broker relationships between the two. These networks provide employers with perspective candidates for jobs and helped match jobseekers to positions.

Despite these efforts, challenges remained. Some candidates put forward were poorly prepared or did not have the right skills. Also, accessibility remains a challenge and was particularly tricky to navigate with employers who did not own their own building so had limited ability to make adjustments to the work environment. Other challenges included the location of jobs as it was perceived that people with disabilities found it harder to be flexible with regards to where they could work due to inaccessible transport. Some employers still discriminate based on impairment and prefer employees with mild to moderate impairments, and in particular people with physical impairments. People with intellectual impairments were thought to be particularly marginalised. To address this challenge, employers

must be open to more of a dialogue between people with intellectual impairments and the Organisations of People with Disabilities that support them.

4.   Main themes – key messages

The process of thematic analysis involved the team in discussions about the data. This is like looking for patterns in the image below. Each researcher may have a slightly different perception of what is there, i.e. in the data. Through discussion and combining of ideas, agreement about the main themes and how they relate to each other is arrived at, over several sessions of debate! Evidence (i.e. quotes from the data) is identified to support the analysis.
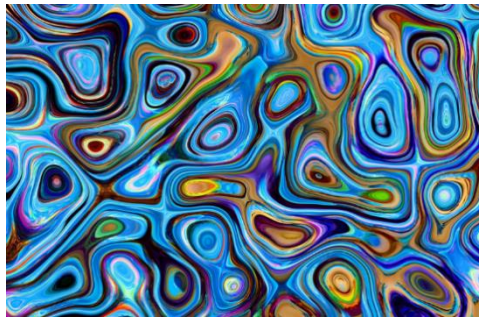
Source: PublicDomainPictures.net

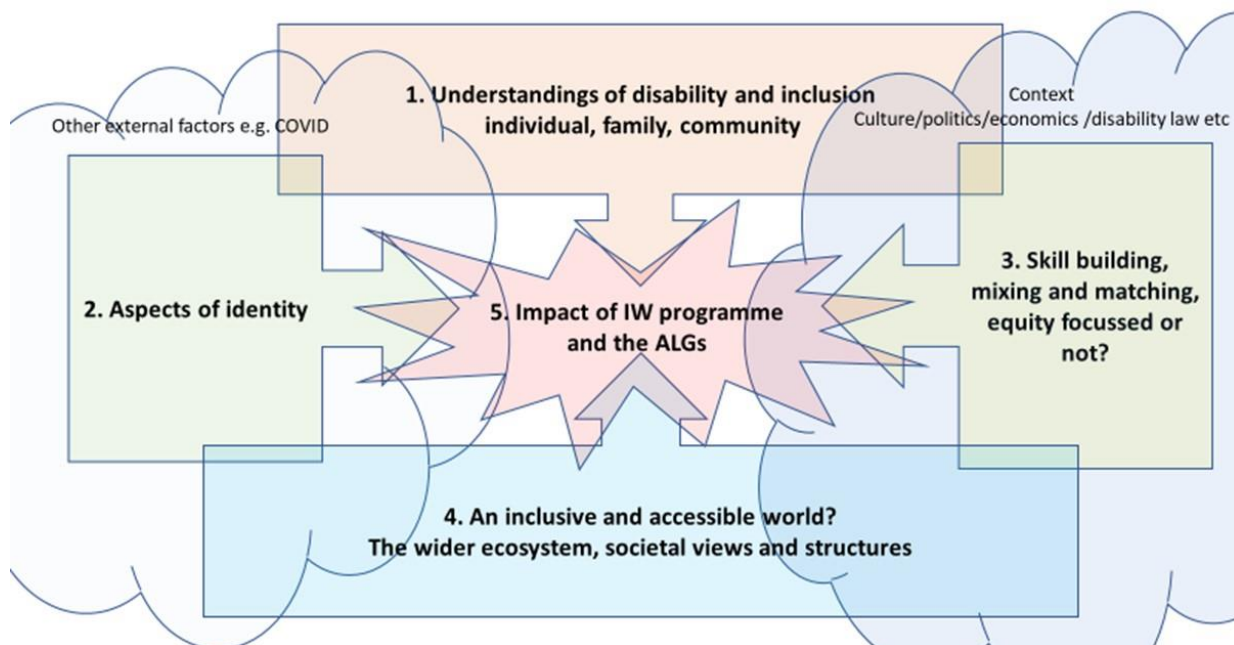The 5 main themes we agreed on as a group are represented below. There is clearly some overlap between them.

1) Understandings of disability and inclusion: individual, family, community

2) Aspects of identity

3) Skill building, mixing and matching, equity focussed or not?

4) An inclusive and accessible world: the wider ecosystem, societal views and structures

5) Impact of the IW programme and the ALGs

Also, the two clouds floating over the themes represent two other important aspects which affect everything:

I.   Other external factors such as funding, pandemics and other events

II.   Contextual factors in each country: cultural, political, and economic and disability policy related.

We have tried to represent the five key themes, showing that they all interact and influence the outcomes for individuals. No one aspect will 'solve' the inclusion puzzle!

Figure 3: **Mind map representing the five key mega-themes and other overarching factors**

Figure content (labels):
- Other external factors e.g. COVID
- 1. Understandings of disability and inclusion individual, family, community
- Context Culture/politics/economics /disability law etc
- 2. Aspects of identity
- 5. Impact of IW programme and the ALGs
- 3. Skill building, mixing and matching, equity focussed or not?
- 4. An inclusive and accessible world? The wider ecosystem, societal views and structures

Source: Authors' own

The subthemes that arose and which we have clustered under the key theme headings are listed here.

1) Understandings of disability and inclusion – individuals, systems and society

Debunking myths re people with disabilities and work. Including: understanding about reasonable accommodations/support/adaptations/intentional inclusion/ways of supporting people. Consequences of lack of understanding. Availability of information and in accessible formats. Hierarchies within disability. Exclusion within inclusion, hierarchy of impairments (marginalises those with intellectual, communication, psychosocial and complex impairments more).

2) Aspects of identity

Individuals' age, gender + education + family + experience so far of work, personal aspirations/motivation. Family approval and support or not? Working being part of identity > self-esteem/confidence/expectations for future. Feeling vulnerable/ emotional aspects of being rejected/feeling lonely at work/preferring the idea of being self-employed, feeling safe and appreciated or not/coping mechanisms – how you deal with challenges of life? Being judged solely by your disability. Wanting a public or private job – what is desirable? A pensionable job. Individual preferences about types of employment.

3) Skill mix and matching

'Organisations with a soul' - equity focussed or not? – ways of recruiting – do they provide equal opportunities to apply? About types of jobs and people's skills/including expectations and assumptions (e.g. about level of work- gendered roles etc)/levels of education/recognition of people's desire for a career not just a job for now/equality of opportunity/matching people's passions and interests. Tendency towards under-employment (either only part-time or below skills level). Creation of tokenistic jobs. Cultures at work/profit focussed/people focussed/HR approach. Employers' preferences/assumptions about who can do what. Types of support at work – e.g. HR approaches – getting them onboard/mentors/buddies/career counselling. Some of these have been helpful. Rather a mixed picture. Types of training that lead to work opportunities or don't – much of the training is too generic not fine-tuned enough.

4) An inclusive and accessible world?

The wider ecosystem – societal views and structures. Power in the system. Laws/policies/quotas/antidiscrimination laws etc. and whether they are enacted. Employers and employees understanding of these. Transport – often a barrier to getting to work. Media portrayal of people with disabilities and work. Role models (employers or employees). Relationships (positive or negative) between different actors – e.g. individuals, employers, other employees, OPDs, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), government organisations. Support vs accusation/suspicion. Power gradients between people and what to do about them.

5) IW programme and the ALGs

The benefit of them/power within-becoming stronger/peer support and networking with others/repositioning themselves or not - in relation to others. Solidarity - increased social capital from being in group. Value of increased social networks. Hearing what others are experiencing. Seeing different possible pathways. Building a sense of collective identity. Shifts in sense of potential/self-efficacy. Building bridges between employers and jobseekers (contact theory). Importance of stakeholder partnerships. Thinking about future – harnessing power to act. Building employers understanding.

Additionally, the two clouds floating over the themes are like weather systems – affecting everything.

I.   Other special effects

Global events and factors such as COVID-19, war, global economic downturn, international level treaties and events etc.

II.   Contextual factors

Cultural/economic/geographic/political/gender relations/disability related law in each country.

5.   Key Messages

From the jobseekers

Many have a strong preference towards self-employment/own business development rather than being employed, although others have a preference for formal employment, especially in the public sector.

Women often have additional barriers to employment including home and family responsibilities, parents or husbands not supporting them working outside the home (related to gender power relations but also concerns re safety).

Working far from home is often problematic – people don't feel safe or able to work away and it is expensive to travel. Accessible transport can be an issue.

Skills trainings are good but are often experienced as too generic – not tailored to specific job markets or people's interests.

People want to have opportunities for work that matches their interests and aspiration not just any job.

There is ongoing 'exclusion within inclusion' i.e. a hierarchy of impairments – where some groups are particularly disadvantaged and seen as not easy to employ.

There are ongoing experiences of stigma and discrimination – lack of understanding about disability rights and equality (e.g. amongst public and employers), and lack of recognition of the contribution that people with disabilities could make – continued stereotyping and assumptions about who could do what in the job market.

From the employers

A lot of learning has happened but there is still more to do.

Some employees still unconvinced about inclusion and worried about costs of reasonable accommodation etc.

They need more practical advice and direct face to face experience with people with disabilities.

Role models and meeting others who have been successful helps.

Still a tendency to think that only people with some types of impairments can fill posts.

Next steps for the groups

Some groups are planning to continue to meet or stay in touch with each other after the end of the IW programme. This varies between groups. Their aspirations for future purpose and activities include:

> To swap ideas – to share skills they have learnt
> For mutual support

To hear about each other's successes and challenges
To campaign and lobby in relation to disability inclusion

6. Reflections from Action Learning Group Facilitators

The action learning facilitators had various opportunities to reflect on their role, what they had learnt from doing this work and how they might use it in the future. There were verbal reflections during team meetings and finally also an invitation to write a short piece about their perspectives. They thought about the methods used and their experiences with the groups and the whole process, as well as reflecting on some of the themes which have emerged from the groups.

Safe spaces to gain insights

> *The members of both groups shared their experiences openly given the provision of safe spaces which was in its own a reasonable accommodation. (EW)*

> *Imbedded in those stories are lots of insights that could be lost if the participants were limited to some response options. (SCU)*

The facilitators noted that the format allowed for the participants to share freely and openly in what felt like a safe space to them. The participants wanted to have their say and the format and participatory methods used allowed for different insights to emerge that might not have emerged in a more formal structured methodology. They were given the opportunity to focus on what they were interested in and take ownership of the process. Having multiple meetings meant that new learning emerged over time. The value of these spaces meant that groups were keen to find ways to continue after the IW programme ended. With more resources they could have taken some of their ideas, such as finding out why employers were turning them down, further.

Two examples of insights gained include:

Through their conversations with the jobseekers with disabilities in Kenya who talked about their passions and interests in the area of work, one of the facilitators realised, that unlike for themselves or others around them when they had been entering work (from a space of privilege being from a middle-class family and educated in public and private institutions):

> *I found that the narrative for young job seekers with disability, questions were narrow – what can you do? What does your disability allow you to do? There was limited discussion on what they were passionate about. It was about, how do we get you into employment, with very limited regard to what the individual was interested in. For me, it felt like young people with disability did not have 'permission' to share, live in and explore their spaces of interest. That is something they could do in their spare time and in most cases, were 'not allowed to or expected to have the luxury to' as it would not put food on the table. (JN)*

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When doing a forward-thinking exercise where the participants in Bangladesh struggled to come up with suggestions and solutions for change, another facilitator noted that:

> *From the discussions, I realised that the job seekers had good knowledge about their challenges but they know very little about the way out. (SS)*

The challenges of going online

> *Conducting online meetings was challenging. Only two members of youth ALG and four members of women ALG could access the online meetings separately and independently; rest of the members had to come to a common meeting place and used to connect together by using only one device. It was very difficult to ensure everyone's participation in that way. (SS)*

However, despite the groups being a space to share, the online format which arose because of the COVID-19 pandemic caused problems for participants and the facilitators as some participants struggled with connectivity issues and network fluctuations, or with having the right technology needed to join in individually, and accessibility issues as a result. This made ensuring everyone's participation much harder for the facilitators. People with intellectual disabilities and people with deaf blindness were especially affected by the move online. The facilitators noted that participants in all the groups expressed a preference for doing the groups in person, something they too preferred.

An opportunity to learn and develop personally as a facilitator

> *It was an opportunity for me to learn, to be in a space where I was completely unsure of myself. It was a place of humility, self-reflection and self-awareness. (JN)*

> *I must confess though that it was initially scary for me to engage participants [in the ALG process] without an idea of what to expect. (SCU)*

> *Before involving this project, mainly I had some ideas about the obstacles of the persons with disabilities; but by talking with them, gradually, I learnt why they were facing the challenges. I realised that more than physical, disability is a social issue; mainly because of social norms, culture, insecurity and bad infrastructure, persons with disabilities are facing challenges. (SS)*

On a more personal level, the experience was an opportunity for the facilitators to learn in much more depth about the disability space and/or new methods. This was initially scary for some as they did not know what to expect and were worried about getting things wrong, but it was also a space for them to develop and learn from the groups' participants.

Carrying forward my learnings into future work

> *The last couple of months challenged me as an individual. I asked myself, in what ways have I been inclusive or exclusive? What more can I do with the knowledge I have? Who can I share this experience with? What opportunities can I leverage on to support getting young people with disability into employment? (JN)*

> *I hope to always remember to use ALGs to encourage stakeholders, especially beneficiaries, to objectively reflect on their experiences as peers. (SCU)*

The facilitators wanted to take what they had learnt from the experience on into their future lives and work. They planned to use the methods to advance their advocacy work and were thinking about how to be more disability inclusive in their everyday lives. They thought of doing things like having conversations with their younger relatives about disabilities, taking them to disability events, and those who were in the position to employ people with disabilities were in the process of doing so.

7.   Conclusions from the team

Overall, we found that the action learning group approach was a successful way of collecting longitudinal data about the unfolding experiences of the group members as the programme evolved. It was unfortunate that the original plan for them to run for two years was not achievable. The group members generally (particularly the jobseekers groups), developed strong supportive relationships with each other and felt that the action learning groups were a safe space where they could discuss their experiences candidly without the power dynamics that might arise in a mixed group (e.g. of people with and without disabilities, or different roles) or a shifting membership.

The jobseekers appreciated the different aspects of the Inclusion Works programme although their individual involvement varied greatly, some having experienced several of the interventions, others none at all or only one. There was a mixed response to the trainings they received either in person or online and offers such as mentoring. As many of the jobseekers had medium or high levels of education, their aspirations about the kind of work they wanted were also high and in some cases they felt that these ambitions were not really catered for.

Gender and impairment related issues arose regularly, where women and those with the typically marginalised impairment groups felt at a disadvantage and had more complicated dilemmas to resolve (e.g. around family relationships, or around negotiating appropriate reasonable accommodation and understandings of what they could do in employment). In fact, the voices of those with cognitive/intellectual impairments, psychosocial and communication are largely missing from our data, which echoes the low representation of these groups in the programme activities more generally. There is more work to do in challenging stereotypes about these groups and to encourage society at large and employers to be more actively inclusive of them.

Employers' groups were more difficult to convene and numbers in these groups were generally lower. This perhaps reflects employers' large number of other commitments and priorities, and perhaps a lack of understanding of what the action learning groups might achieve. We struggled somewhat to get buy in and support from our consortium partners to achieve recruitment of employers into these groups. It may be that the role or seniority level of those invited needed adjustment. However those employers who did participate reported finding the group discussions useful, enlightening and supportive. They shared both concerns about how they could achieve inclusion in their workplaces and some very positive examples of having learnt that inclusion can work well.

What we have learnt is that there is an appetite for more inclusive employment in all four countries but that it is complex and that many parts of the jigsaw are yet to be in place. At the individual level achieving a positive employment outcome for some people is reasonably easy (i.e. those with a high level of education and who have impairments for which the accommodations needed are easy to understand). However there are many people who do not fall into these categories who are still

unlikely to be offered the kind of work they would like, and to have a positive experience in the workplace.

At the systems level, although global and national guidelines, laws and policies are in place, there is still a perpetuating lack of an inclusive approach in many government and nongovernment agencies. A deep understanding of the need for an avowedly and automatically equitable approach which values and appreciates everyone as a potential employee is still far off in most contexts. Very often a disability inclusive approach to policy making and practice is absent unless there is someone specifically championing it. It is clear that organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) can play a key role in promoting understanding and action.

We have used the analogy of a complicated road map, like the one below!
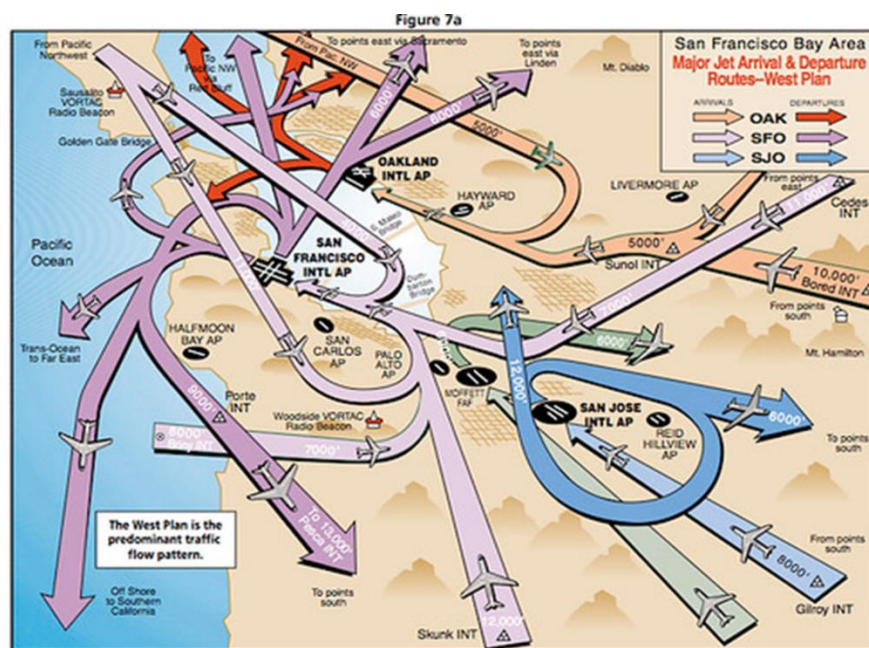
Source: flickr

Here we can see that there are many possible routes (towards disability inclusive employment), some fast, some slower and which overlap. Some are not direct. Perhaps we are only at the start/edge of map or are still drawing the map and finding the different roads and routes to inclusion? Some people may be starting from different places on the map. The different colours might represent different types of people – who might need or choose different routes and go at different paces with different supports? Many barriers and obstacles may exist (and the data is mainly about these at the moment). These need to be navigated, bridges built, rivers and mountains crossed etc. Perhaps some of the routes are just small paths at the moment, that some pioneering people have followed? These could be trailblazers who had a head start, or a faster vehicle (more social capital?) Others may be going more slowly and have no proper route onto the highway yet? We need to be concerned about these people who are at risk of being left further behind. We need to make a plan to build better roads to travel along and more signposts and tea stops! This will take time.

Acknowledgements

8. Appendices

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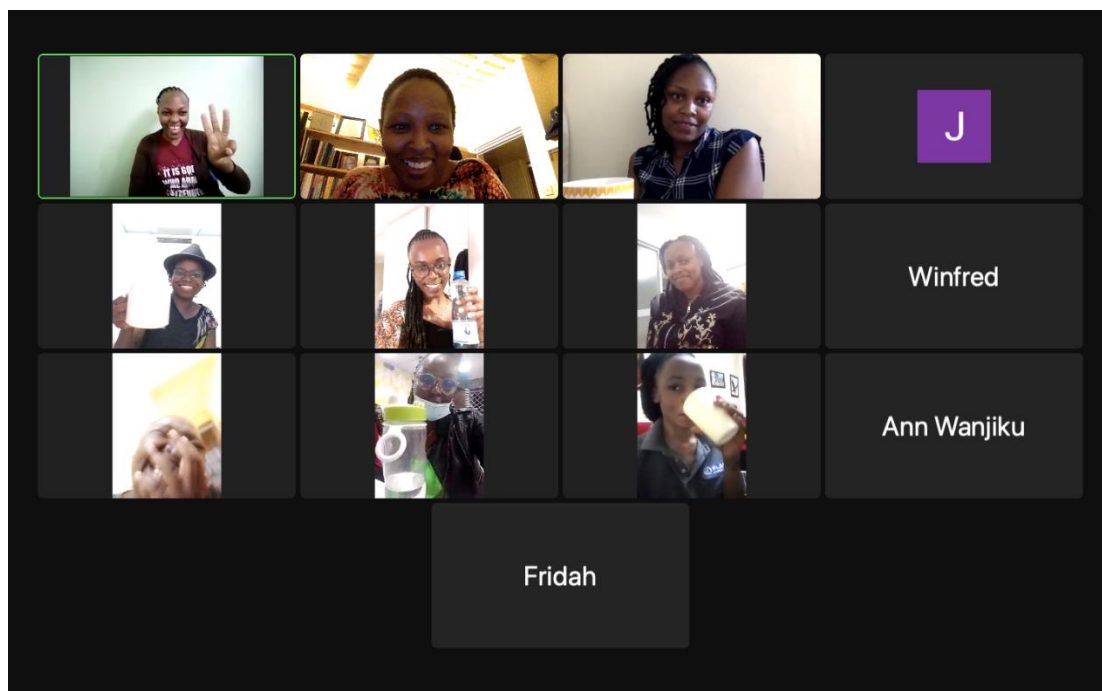
Photos

Bangladesh: women's group
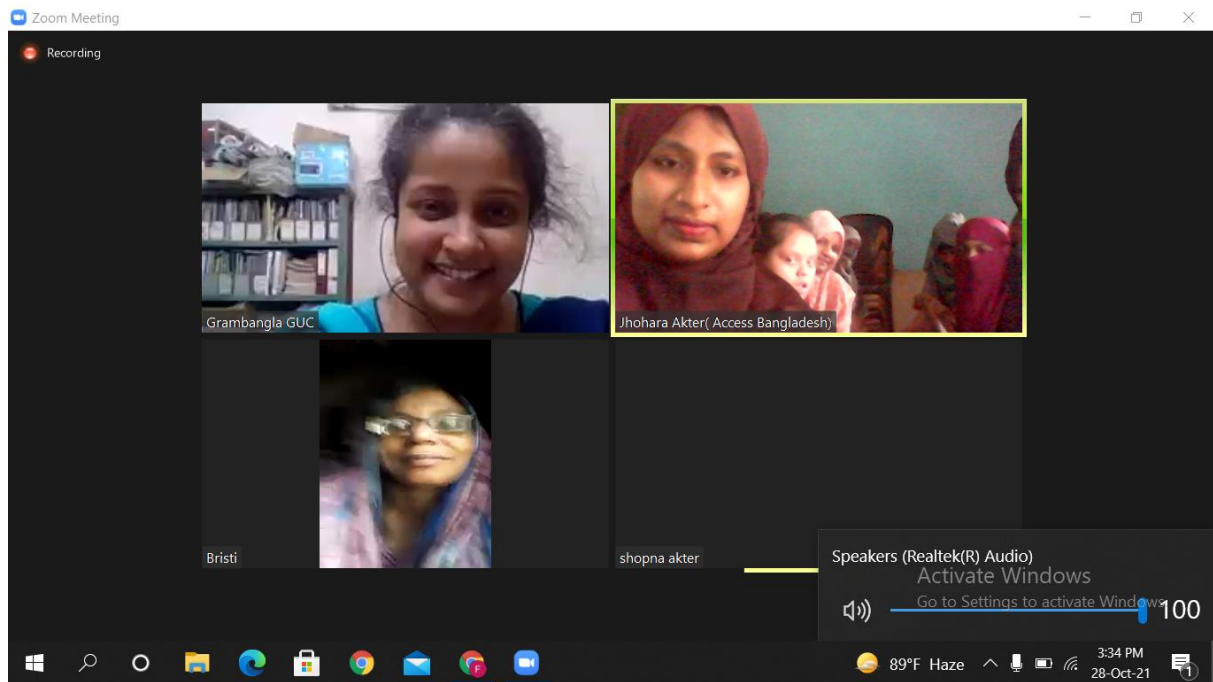
Source: Sayma Sayed

Kenya: Women's group

Source: Josephine Njungi

Kenya: Youth group

Source: Josephine Njungi

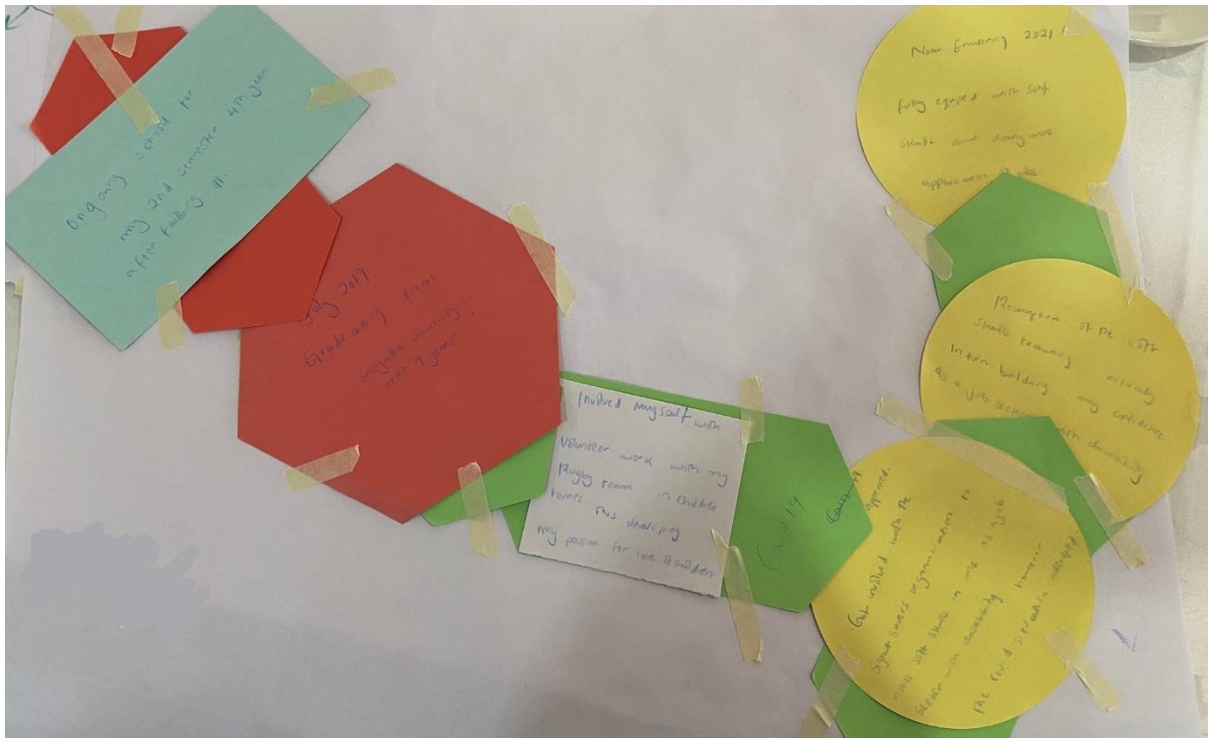Source: Josephine Njungi

Nigeria: Women's group

Source: Shadrach Chuba-Uzo

Uganda: Youth group

Source: Eric Wakoko

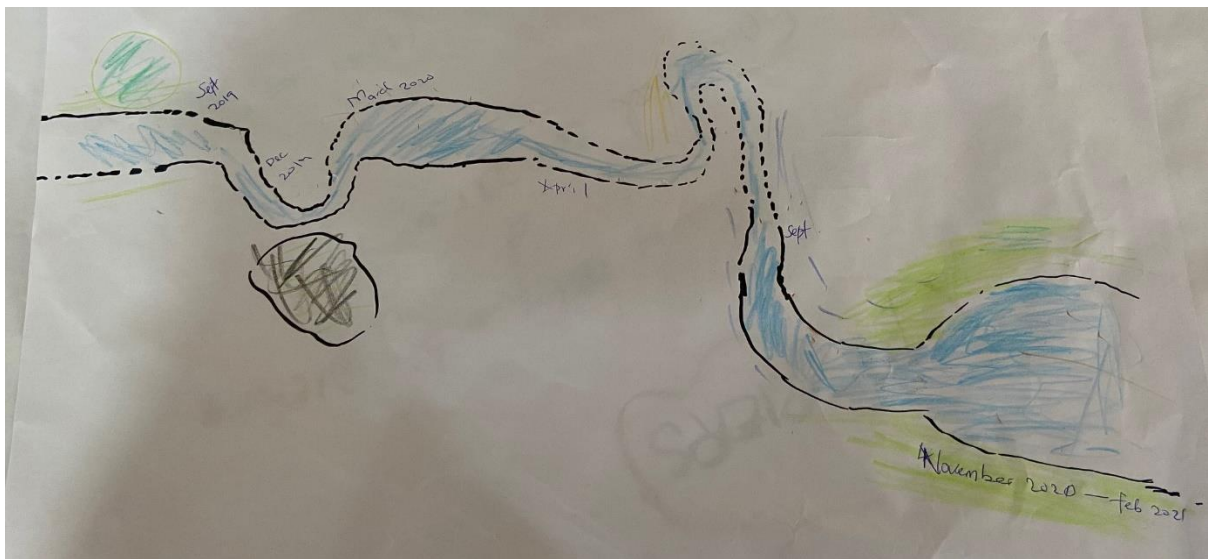**Other visual info** – Examples of rivers of life from the Kenya youth group

Source: Josephine Njungi

Source: Josephine Njungi