



Photo by Holly Powers/CRS

Disability Inclusion

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN CRS PROGRAMS

CRS' Commitment

People with disabilities account for 15% of the world's population—over a billion people—and are a part of every society. They confront social, economic and cultural barriers that limit their full and effective participation in society. It is these barriers, combined with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, that disable individuals and contribute to poverty and disempowerment. The United Nations Development Program estimates that 80% of all people with disabilities reside in low-income countries. Even with gains made in the global fight against poverty, most people with disabilities in these countries have not experienced improvements in their well-being.¹ People with disabilities and their families are more likely to live in poverty, based on key indicators related to hunger, income, household expenditures, asset ownership, and multidimensional poverty. They lack access to education, health services and livelihoods. Additionally, they are underrepresented in decision making and political participation in their communities.²

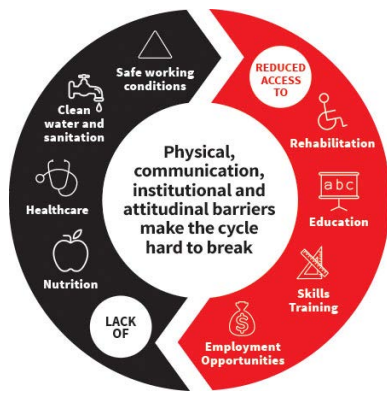
As part of our agency strategy, Vision 2030, CRS has committed to integrating disability inclusive approaches throughout our programs, including those targeting young people, ranging from shelter and social cohesion to family strengthening, livelihoods and education. As of March 2023, CRS has 18 active disability-inclusive projects in 16 countries.

CRS' Approach

CRS works toward a world where all people with disabilities are no longer overlooked or excluded from humanitarian and development activities. We start from a rights-based perspective and then integrate principles of non-discrimination, full and effective participation and accessibility so that people with disabilities can achieve their full human potential. We examine barriers related to local laws, cultural norms, workplace policies and project activities so that young people with disabilities can access education, training, employment opportunities or start-up funds for their dream business, and have the confidence to pursue their goals. In addition, CRS implements a

1 WHO World Report on Disability, 2011. apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/44575.

2 U.N. Flagship Report on Disability, December 2018. un.org/development/desa/disabilities/publication-disability-sdgs.html.



Source: EndtheCycle.org

twin-track approach to disability inclusion. This means we make investments to address inequality in our programs and factor needs of marginalized groups while also developing targeted programs for specific needs of people with disabilities and leveling the playing field for their participation. Lastly, we are intentional about collecting and using disability disaggregated data to identify participation barriers, inform project design and implementation, and evaluate the extent to which our programs have reached people with disabilities.

Marginalization of young persons with disabilities is compounded as young persons with disabilities find it challenging for their perspectives to be considered and included due to the lack of leadership opportunities and the intersectional discrimination based on their disability and their youth identity.

—UN Call to Action on the Meaningful Participation of Young Persons with Disabilities, 2021

Key Considerations

The following are some best practices to consider:

- Partnering with organizations of persons with disabilities.
- Ensuring budget allocation for reasonable accommodations.
- Disaggregating data by disability to guide all phases of a project.
- Applying an intersectionality lens.
- Ensuring accessibility of job training programs and work sites.
- Offering life skills training to build confidence of participants.
- Providing opportunities to build professional networks and getting buy-in from young people's families so they are fully supported.

Photo by CRS Staff



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Investing in the Dreams of Young People with Disabilities in Madagascar

“While my family has invested their efforts on agriculture, I have put mine in education” says Ambintsoa, left, age 24, who was born with a mobility impairment that kept her from being able to work in the fields with her family. The CRS-led Maharo project in Madagascar, funded by the United States’ Agency for International Development, has supported this once shy young woman through life skills training. “As I started to feel more confident and outgoing, I took my chance by submitting a business proposal,”

Ambintsoa explains. Her proposal had one of the highest scores and was funded by Maharo in 2021.

“I am dreaming of becoming a midwife one day,” says Ambintsoa as she explains her plans. Her own investment in her education started when she enrolled as a community health worker in the field of maternal and child health. She regularly monitors the growth of young children in her village and conducts awareness-raising activities. “I felt empowered enough to join a few other local structures under the Maharo project,” she adds, becoming a member of her village development committee as well as of its local disaster and risk management committee. Maharo’s investment in disability-inclusive approaches gave Ambintsoa the skills and opportunity she needed to pursue her goals while contributing to her community.

For more information on this program and CRS, please scan this code

