



SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL: DISABILITY INCLUSION

Who this tool is for

This disability inclusion assessment tool is designed to help organisations explore their level of inclusion for people with disabilities and to plan how to become more inclusive.

Organisations at any stage on their inclusion journey can use this tool, whether you are just starting to think about the issues, or you work for an organisation of people with disabilities and want to include more marginalised groups.

This tool can be applied to both your organisational practices and your programme and project work. It has been designed to support thinking around programme design and planning, and programme delivery, communication and evaluation. But it is not only for assessing individual activities or stand-alone projects, nor is it only for assessing internal organisational systems. Rather, it provides a shared framework to help you think about disability inclusion in a rounded way.

How to use this tool

Many similar tools exist, but they focus on gender and social inclusion. Our research shows that many organisations want more practical support to meaningfully include people with disabilities. This includes organisations addressing inequalities and organisations of people with disabilities.

Our research participants highlighted that meaningful participation means involving people with disabilities at every stage. And this participation should have a real impact on the way organisations, programmes and projects work, rather than being tokenistic.

The tool provides a common framework to discuss disability inclusion. Its key functions are:

- To help you reflect on the current level of inclusion across all levels of your organisation, programme or project, from planning through to implementation and evaluation.

- To help stakeholders identify shared concerns and the actions to take to increase inclusion.

This self-assessment tool is part of a wider toolkit. The toolkit also includes a glossary of terms, a summary of our research about collaboration and more tools. You can explore the tools and resources [here](#).

What is disability inclusion?

Disability inclusion means making sure people with disabilities can take part in programmes, decisions and activities on an equal basis with others. It involves:

- removing barriers
- providing the support people need to participate
- recognising that people have different experiences and knowledge based on their type of disability, gender, age and other factors.

Inclusion is not only about access but also about respect, participation and shared decision making.

Why disability inclusion is important

When programmes are not inclusive, people with disabilities are left out of services, opportunities and benefits. This reinforces existing inequalities and can even cause harm. Disability inclusion helps programmes reach the whole community. It improves fairness, strengthens results and supports human rights. It ensures that the people most affected by discrimination are part of shaping solutions.



Different levels of inclusion

There are different approaches to inclusion, which lead to different levels of inclusion.

Exploitative inclusion:

This approach may look like inclusion on the surface, but it typically reinforces negative power dynamics. In this approach, people with disabilities are represented as passive recipients of support instead of active agents in their own lives. An example of this is when an organisation includes images of people with disabilities in its communications to promote its work or gain funding, but it does not treat people with disabilities as equal partners. Another example is when an organisation expects people with disabilities to volunteer without compensation or tries to consult them without making reasonable accommodations. This type of inclusion may reinforce stigmatising norms or deepen people with disabilities' economic marginalisation.

Overlooked inclusion:

People with disabilities are not considered in the design, delivery or evaluation of programmes. No data is gathered on disability, so it is not clear if people with disabilities are being reached. Events and activities are planned without considering accessibility for people with disabilities.

Intentional inclusion:

Design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and activities plan to include people with disabilities. But the broader, underlying inequalities and barriers that cause exclusion are not addressed. Organisations may have inclusive values and ambitions, but they may not understand or engage with a wide range of experiences of people with disabilities. Reaching this level of inclusion is an important first step if you want to achieve transformative inclusion.

Transformative inclusion:

Actively engaging with and changing the inequalities and barriers that people with disabilities experience to achieve long-term impact. Discriminatory norms and unequal power dynamics are challenged. People whose voices are less heard within the disability community are actively sought out, and they are supported to participate meaningfully.

Tips for completing this tool

This tool should be completed collaboratively over a series of conversations within all levels of your organisation and with key stakeholders. It should not be completed by one person alone. The greater variety of people involved, the richer the discussion.

Make the discussion about actual activities and practices that have happened in the last year. It is important to include field staff in the discussion as they can describe what is actually happening on the ground. Doing this will help the discussion stay grounded in reality and stop it moving into idealistic or 'aspirational' language that sounds more like a project proposal.

The way exclusion works means we may not see who we are not including. To address this, take an intentional approach to your disability inclusion analysis. This means making a clear and deliberate decision to seek out those who are excluded. Having expertise from a varied group of people with disabilities within the disability inclusion team is important to help guide these conversations, dig further into assumptions and challenge whether activities are truly inclusive.

Do not try and complete an electronic version of the tool form during the discussion. This will limit the freedom of the discussion and can end up feeling like an editing exercise.

Repeat this exercise each year or in line with project planning cycles. It will provide a regular space to keep staff and partners focussed on ways to be as effective and inclusive as possible.

Keep trying to find opportunities to challenge social norms and the root causes of exclusion. This could make your activities more inclusive and ensure they have a longer-lasting impact.

Be careful that one dimension of inclusion does not hide others. There is a wide range of experience within disability. If you only focus on one group at risk of exclusion, such as people with physical disabilities, it can limit the range of discussion and could exclude the experiences of people with different impairments. For example, people may have intellectual or psychosocial disabilities in addition to other disabilities. And people with disabilities will also have intersectional experiences relating to things like their gender, age and ethnicity. See the research summary for more information on [key terms](#).



How this tool works

This tool is in two sections. The first section covers planning. The second section covers implementation and evaluation.

There are five questions in each section. Each question asks the organisation to rate itself on a score from 0 to 3. Examples are provided of what each score might feel like in relation to 'exploitative', 'overlooked', 'intentional' and 'transformative' inclusion. You should discuss each question and the examples before choosing a score and providing comments to explain your score.

The scores are designed to help organisations reflect and learn, rather than for critique or accountability.

When your organisation first uses the tool it may result in a fairly high score. But the more you use the tool the more honest and self-critical you may become as you recognise the value of finding ways to adapt to become more inclusive.

Section one: Programme design and planning



1. Question: Does the programme's scope and objectives aim to improve the lives of people with disabilities?

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: The programme works on addressing inequality but does not integrate people with disabilities into its activities or decision making:
Inclusion Score = 0

Overlooked: The programme does not address the issues identified through any inclusion analysis, and people with disabilities are usually seen as one group without recognising their differences:
Inclusion Score = 1

Intentional: The programme has at least one goal or objective that responds to the specific needs of people with disabilities: Inclusion Score = 2

Transformative: The programme has at least one goal or objective that responds to the specific needs of people with disabilities. And it has at least one goal or objective that explicitly aims to change the conditions that exclude people with disabilities, including discriminatory social norms, policy barriers and other structural or systemic barriers:
Inclusion Score = 3

Your notes:

Your score:

2. Question: Does the programme analyse how disability and other exclusion factors (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, age, class, race) influence people's relative position in society, and the distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints and power in a given context?

3. Question: Does the budget allocate financial resources for disability-inclusive design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: Analysis exists but includes stereotypes of people with disabilities, or shallow rather than well-evidenced discussion: **Inclusion Score = 0**

Overlooked: An analysis is done, but it is silent on disability or only treats disability in a surface way: **Inclusion Score = 1**

Intentional: An analysis is done at the beginning of the programme and looks in-depth at how disability, and its intersection with other characteristics, influences people's access to resources and services: **Inclusion Score = 2**

Transformative: A situation analysis is done at different stages of the programme. It examines how disability, together with other characteristics, influences people's status in society. This includes their access to resources, level of influence, and participation in decision making. The analysis looks at social norms, who upholds these norms, how they are maintained and how they discriminate against specific groups: **Inclusion Score = 3**

Your notes:

Your score:

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: Programme design includes people with disabilities, but there are no dedicated budget lines for reasonable accommodations and accessibility: **Inclusion Score = 0**

Overlooked: No dedicated budget for inclusion of people with disabilities: **Inclusion Score = 1**

Intentional: There is dedicated budget for: inclusion analysis at the beginning of the programme; specific activities targeting the practical needs of people with disabilities and other excluded groups; specific budget for reasonable adjustments: **Inclusion Score = 2**

Transformative: Dedicated budget for: inclusion analysis at the beginning of the programme; specific activities targeting the practical needs of people with disabilities and other excluded groups; specific budget for reasonable adjustments for a range of disabilities, including less-heard voices; employment of people with disabilities to lead the work; training staff members and/or partner staff on inclusion: **Inclusion Score = 3**

Your notes:

Your score:

4. Question: Does the organisation ensure appropriate technical expertise on inclusion programmes?

5. Question: Are there systems in place to support safeguarding and protection?

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: The organisation includes people with disabilities, but only in voluntary or junior roles in order to engage with the wider community of people with disabilities: **Inclusion Score = 0**

Overlooked: Programme staff are not expected to have lived experience or technical expertise on disability and inclusion: **Inclusion Score = 1**

Intentional: Dedicated inclusion expertise is available for specific activities. Wider organisational staff only have a basic understanding of disability inclusion. People with disabilities are employed but are not in leadership positions: **Inclusion Score = 2**

Transformative: People with a wide range of different disabilities are employed, and they are supported to succeed with reasonable adjustments. People with disabilities are represented in leadership positions across the organisation. There is training available for all staff on inclusion: **Inclusion Score = 3**

Your notes:

Your score:

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: The organisation has services for, or activities with, people with disabilities, but it has no safeguarding systems. Or it has policies that assume people with disabilities are always vulnerable and have no agency over their lives: **Inclusion Score = 0**

Overlooked: The organisation mentions safeguarding in other policies (e.g., finance, human resources), but without a great level of detail. Or it has a child-only or adult-only safeguarding policy (not both), or it has safeguarding policies that are older than five years: **Inclusion Score = 1**

Intentional: The organisation has safeguarding policies covering both children and adults which have been reviewed in the last five years: **Inclusion Score = 2**

Transformative: The organisation has safeguarding policies covering children and adults which have been reviewed in the last five years, and the policy considers power dynamics. Reporting of safeguarding concerns is possible through a range of accessible formats, and this is clearly communicated to staff and participants: **Inclusion Score = 3**

Your notes:

Your score:

Section 2: Programme delivery, communication and evaluation



6. Question: Does the organisation apply user-led and disability-inclusive approaches in its work?

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: People with disabilities receive services, but the organisation prefers to work with only one or two community representatives because it finds engagement costly or difficult: Inclusion Score = 0

Overlooked: The organisation is generally supportive of disability inclusion but has no specific strategies to achieve this. People with disabilities are seen as a single group of people who are all the same: Inclusion Score = 1

Intentional: The organisation has people with disabilities as a key target group, but lacks strategies to put people with disabilities in the lead: Inclusion Score = 2

Transformative: The organisation has people with disabilities as a key target group, and it uses participatory and inclusive approaches to enable people with disabilities to lead programme design and key activities. For organisations of people with disabilities, the majority of the board and at least 60% of staff in management positions are people with disabilities. The percentage of people with disabilities may depend on country targets, agreed with representative groups: Inclusion Score = 3

Your notes:

Your score:

7. Question: Is the organisation a key part of the disability community?

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: The organisation's presence is either not recognised or generally not regarded as positive within the disability community. And only a few members of the disability community are constructively involved in the organisation: Inclusion Score = 0

Overlooked: The organisation's presence is somewhat recognised, and generally regarded as positive, within the disability community. A wider range of people from the disability community are constructively engaged with the organisation, but engagement with the disability community is not actively encouraged: Inclusion Score = 1

Intentional: The organisation is reasonably well-known within the disability community. The organisation is viewed as open and responsive to disability community needs, and a range of people with disabilities are constructively involved with the organisation: Inclusion Score = 2

Transformative: The organisation is widely known within the disability community and viewed as actively engaged with and extremely responsive to it; individuals and organisations of people with disabilities are actively and constructively involved: Inclusion Score = 3

Your notes:

Your score:

8. Question: Are there a range of partnerships and alliances which support the organisational goals?

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: Organisations of people with disabilities are included in funding applications but are not supported to act as full and equal partners in design, delivery and evaluation: **Inclusion Score = 0**

Overlooked: The organisation works in isolation and is not part of any alliance, membership organisation, or any formal or informal partnerships with organisations of people with disabilities: **Inclusion Score = 1**

Intentional: The organisation has effectively built and been active in some key relationships in the disability community. It has joined relevant alliances and has formal or informal partnerships with a range of organisations of people with disabilities. But some of these relationships may be unstable or not fully 'win-win' for each partner: **Inclusion Score = 2**

Transformative: The organisation has built, been active in and maintained strong, high-impact relationships with a range of alliances and partners in the disability community, including by taking leadership roles. These relationships are stable, long-term, collaborative, mutually beneficial and advance organisational goals: **Inclusion Score = 3**

Your notes:

Your score:

9. Question: Are effective communication systems and guidelines in place?

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: Organisational communications feature images of people with disabilities to support fundraising or reporting to donors. But people with disabilities are not involved in the programme or organisation: **Inclusion Score = 0**

Overlooked: People with disabilities are not visible in communications. Internal and external communications do not follow accessible communications guidelines: **Inclusion Score = 1**

Intentional: Materials for disability programmes are accessible across a range of formats. These materials represent some types of people with disabilities: **Inclusion Score = 2**

Transformative: All organisational materials always follow accessibility good practice so they reach the widest number of people. These materials visually represent a range of people with disabilities who are actively involved in the organisation: **Inclusion Score = 3**

Your notes:

Your score:

10. Question: Does the monitoring and evaluation framework support the review and assessment of inclusive approaches?

Description of inclusion scores

Exploitative: Feedback and learning from people with disabilities is not acted on: Inclusion Score = 0

Overlooked: There is no involvement of people with disabilities in monitoring and evaluation: Inclusion Score = 1

Intentional: Data is collected on disability and other exclusion factors: Inclusion Score = 2

Transformative: Data is collected on different types of disability and other exclusion factors. Output and outcome indicators are both qualitative and quantitative. Measurements of success go beyond measuring prevalence and include changes in individual agency (for example, changes in self-esteem, aspirations and self-efficacy), or changes in social norms (for example, community perceptions and beliefs): Inclusion Score = 3

Your notes:

Your score:



“You may have a program that you roll out, but it might not benefit the person. You may be thinking of what you’re going to do generally for everybody to benefit. No, it might not benefit me because the way you have put it, due to my uniqueness or my impairment I may not be able to assess or to benefit fully in that kind of program.”

Disability activist, Ghana





NEXT STEPS

Once the self-assessment is complete, you can review your organisation or programme's overall score as well as areas of particular strength or where improvements are needed. The self-assessment should lead to an action plan for the organisation to follow.

Many organisations will have their own action planning template. If your organisation does not, here are some tips on how to create one:

- Review the self-assessment findings: What is missing or needs improvement? What is the organisation or programme good at?
- Action to take: Agree what will be done, step by step, to increase inclusion. Some of the other tools and resources in the wider toolkit may be useful here.
- Engaging your stakeholders: What do your stakeholders with disabilities think about the planned actions? What are their suggestions? What about your other key stakeholders?
- Responsible person or team: Decide: who does what? And who will lead?
- Timeline: Decide when the actions need to be done by.
- Resources needed: Work out how much money, time, support and knowledge is needed to put this plan into action.
- Progress: How will your organisation know the actions have happened? For example, you may decide to do a user survey or retake this self-assessment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, REFERENCES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Adapted from the UK government's 2019 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Self-Assessment Tool for Projects available [here](#), plus Options' GESI self-reflection tool 2022, and Ghana Somubi Dwumadie Organisational capacity assessment tool 2022.

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Activists and organisations are welcome to adapt the tool to meet their needs. Please note that the tool may need to be updated as time passes and circumstances and local contexts change.

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